

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

PRESENT

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

Also in attendance
Councillor Gibson
Councillor Redfern
Councillor Walley

101.14 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence and reasons accepted were received from:

Councillor Deaville
Councillor Ellsum
Councillor Hawley
Councillor Wood

102. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Dispensations.
- b Other Disclosable Interests: Minute 106.14 Councillors Jones and Harper declared other interests

103. MINUTES

- a It was **Resolved** to sign the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 17 February 2015.
- b It was **Resolved** to receive the Minutes of the Allotments Committee held on 25 February 2015.

104. CROSSING, BIDDULPH HIGH STREET

An e-mail response had been received from the County Council with two options for the crossing. Councillor Rogers expressed disappointment, saying that that the job needed doing correctly; it had not lasted and had been redone several times. Similar ones in other towns were not failing.

Councillor Jones concurred and felt that the specification must not have been correct for that crossing at that location. It had not been resilient enough to stand the amount of traffic which went over it.

Councillor Hall noted that this Council had spent a lot of money in partnership with the County and District Council to bring the town up to a good standard, and this would be spoilt with inappropriate repairs. He felt that this Council should pursue the case. Councillor Sheldon thought that aesthetically the crossing should be put back in good order.

Councillor Davies felt that the fill was the problem, whichever topping was used it would still channel. A substantial fill underneath was needed. Councillor Gibson agreed, noting that the crossing was moving and hollowing and could not have good foundations.

Councillor Jackson felt that the main point was that the other raised crossings had not moved – why not? He noted that this Council was a partner in the regeneration scheme to raise the standards of the High Street, with better pavements and better traffic calming. He observed that putting tarmac on this crossing would be like drawing a moustache on the Mona Lisa – vandalism! Councillor Jackson proposed that a letter is written to County Councillors Deaville and Lawson reflecting these concerns and to say that the response from the highway officer was unacceptable. This was seconded by Councillor Jones.

Councillor Adams wondered if there was something underground that no one was aware of that was causing the movement. Councillor Jones added that Partnership money had been spent on the crossing and it should be repaired to that standard; each repair had failed. The Chair closed, adding that the County Council should react positively - a satisfactory outcome was needed. He added that the letter should be sent forthwith. This was Moved.

105. NHS CONSULTATION – NEW MODEL OF CARE

Information plus an invitation to attend a discussion session on the proposed new model of care for the people of Stoke on Trent and North Staffordshire received from the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

Councillor Lovatt expressed concern about the report and felt that it was lacking in detail. One major flaw was the national shortage of nurses and doctors and the report did not address this. The plan was to close hospital services without the wherewithal to put community services in place. The CCG had now decided that all would have to pay for hearing aids; and she added that the plans for end of life and cancer care were shocking.

The Chair encouraged members to make their concerns to the CCG, to attend events and make their feelings known.

Councillor Jackson felt that this was one of the most important things to come before this Council - the health economy of North Staffordshire was in a complete mess, this was the thin end of the wedge; a whole host of things needed addressing; it was the trickle to privatisation of the National Health Service.

Councillor Baddeley felt that it was a done deal, noting that the name change to the Royal Stoke University Hospital (RSUH) had wasted thousands of pounds. There were now 40 more managers since the change from PCT to CCG, but beds were closing; this was disgraceful

Councillor Jones feared for the general malaise of the health service, with no proper policy and short-sighted politicians. He gave anecdotal evidence of a wait of 105 days for an appointment at the RSUH, noting that hospital was not big enough to cope

Councillor Harper proposed that a letter be sent to Marcus Warnes at the CCG, making the feelings of this Council known and inviting him to attend a meeting to hear the concerns at first hand. This was seconded by Councillor Whilding. It was moved to send the letter forthwith.

106. COMMUNICATIONS/CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

- a A letter was received from Support Staffordshire regarding the future of the Churnet Valley Living Landscape Partnership and asking for interested councillors to join a steering group. There are to be three events to discuss this in more detail – the closest is at Rudyard Activity Centre on Wednesday 15th April at 6.30 pm.
- b Information on the National Plant Monitoring Scheme received. The scheme asks for volunteers to visit a kilometre square local to them to record plants they find there. Volunteers will get support and access to training. Press release and poster also received.
- c Information was received from the Police & Crime Commissioner on People Power Funding – grants between £100 - £3000 for community based organisations to provide projects which improve public safety, reduce crime and increase public confidence

107. MEETINGS ATTENDED DURING THE MONTH

- a Councillor Gibson had used the greatly improved steps and declared them excellent, clean and just what we wanted. He congratulated the Chair of the Civic Committee and the Chief Officer. Councillor Davies responded, adding that Councillor Gibson had been one of the severest critics of the old steps and that this praise was very much appreciated.
- b Councillor Lovatt had met with the Secretary of the Friends of Biddulph Valley Park and with the Chief Officer to confirm funding for the refurbishment of one of the paths.
- c Councillor Jackson gave notification of a consultation meeting about proposed changes to the Fire and Rescue Services(FARS), to be held at Kidsgrove Town Hall on 25 March. There may be repercussions for Biddulph. Councillor Harper noted that he had been approached by a member of the Leek FARS in December 2014 expressing concern about the non-retention of the Leek Fire Station. Councillor Harper had spoken to Karen Bradley MP, and he had received a letter in return which stated that no decision had yet been made, but that he would be kept informed of any developments. Councillor Jones proposed that a letter is written to FARS and to the MP with our concerns and to ask for more information; seconded by Councillor Harper. Councillor Redfern felt that this was another sham consultation; he believed that all part time fire fighters would cease to be employed; that certain super fire stations - for example those in Leek and Cheadle - would be manned 24 hours per day, but that this would not include those in Biddulph or Kidsgrove. The station in Biddulph would continue to house community users, but no fire appliance.
- d Councillor Jones said that he knew of three local people who had received early diagnosis from the Biddulph Breast Screening Unit and had been successfully treated. He congratulated Councillors Lovatt and Walley for their efforts in bringing the mobile unit to the town, adding that it had probably saved many more lives.

- e Councillor Rogers noted that the Festival Committee had reconvened in preparation for this year's season.

108. LENGTHMAN WORK

None reported.

109. CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

1 Form for Biddulph Guide

Emailed and a copy also included with the agenda – please return by the end of March with any information you would like to see included in the new guide.

2 Mayor's Coffee Morning

The Mayor will host a coffee morning from 10.30 am on Saturday 28 March to thank our volunteers – all councillors are most welcome, but we do need to know numbers for catering purposes.

3 James Bateman Junior High School Open Day

Information has been received about the school Open Day on Wednesday 25 March between 1.30-6.00pm.

4 Consultation letter received – Sandbach Neighbourhood Plan

A Statutory Consultation letter on the Sandbach Neighbourhood Development Plan has been received from the Chair of the SNDP Working Group. The consultation period ends on 1 May 2015.

5 Parish Council Elections 2015

Information on the forthcoming parish council election on 7 May 2015 received from the Returning Officer.

6 Allotments Committee meeting

A reminder that there will be a meeting in the Council Chamber at 5 pm on Wednesday 18 March, with the project manager, to set out the Council's requirements for the new allotment site.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm

Signed Date