

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 15 DECEMBER 2015

PRESENT

The Mayor - Councillor Baddeley
Councillor Davies
Councillor Hall
Councillor Hart
Councillor Jackson
Councillor Jones
Councillor Lawson
Councillor Lovatt
Councillor Nicosia
Councillor Sheldon
Councillor Swift
Councillor Walley
Councillor Whilding
Councillor Wood

Also in attendance:
Councillor Redfern
Councillor Rogers
Councillor Harper
Councillor Hawley

73.15. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from

The Deputy Mayor - Councillor Salt
Councillor Court
Councillor McGuinness
Councillor Rushton

74. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Dispensations: Councillor Hart declared an interest in any matters concerning residential site specifics.
- b Other Disclosable Interests: Councillor Sheldon declared in any matters concerning Biddulph in Bloom. Councillors Davies and Lovatt declared an interest in the CAB as board members.

75. MINUTES

- a It was **Resolved** to sign the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 17 November 2015.
- b It was **Resolved** to receive the Minutes of the meeting of the Burial Grounds Committee held on 8 December 2015.

76. BUDGET FOR 2016/17

The following expenditure was Moved for the next financial year for this Committee:

Expenditure 2015-16

	Estimated 2015-16	Actual to 1 Dec	Estimated 2016-17
Allotments	5000.00	1290.47	5000.00
Contingency	5000.00	0.00	5000.00
Lengthsman	5000.00	3825.00	5000.00
Woodhouse Burial Ground*	0.00	3199.26	0.00
Burial Grounds Maintenance	28000.00	17869.55	28000.00
	43000.00	26184.28	43000.00

*Note: WBG expenditure drawn from remaining allocated reserve, not General Purposes Committee budget

PROPOSED ROOM CHARGES – COUNCIL CHAMBER 2016/17

Councillor Hall felt that care should be taken with block bookings, which may exclude other users.

- a Business Hire
 - £25 per hour
 - £100 per ½ day
 - £150 per full day
- b Non-profit making
 - £12.50 per hour
 - £45 per ½ day
 - £75 per full day

Councillor Harper proposed that the Chief Officer should exercise her discretion with section b. This was agreed.

- c Joint Meetings

It was confirmed that there was no charge for meetings in which the Town Council was a partner (eg District Council & County Council meetings, Friends of Biddulph Valley Park, Moorlands Partnership Board, Biddulph in Bloom). It was agreed to add the following to that list – Sports Council, Twinning, Fairtrade, Biddulph Community Festival, Mayor's Race, defibrillator training.

It was Moved to reciprocate and to charge for room hire if this Council was charged.

The above was agreed and the proposed charges were Moved.

77. TR32/15 PARK LANE AND CONWAY ROAD, KNYPERSLEY

Information received from the County Council re Traffic Regulation Order at junction of Conway Road and Park Lane. Objections to be received by 7 January 2016

Councillor Jackson noted that this was part of his DHP and he was hopeful to it get underway as soon as possible.

78. CITIZEN'S ADVICE BUREAU

Annual Impact Report 2015 received from the Staffordshire North & Stoke on Trent Citizens Advice Bureaux.

79 CHAIR'S EMERGENCY ITEM

Rumours had been circulating about the possible closure of the Bemersley Waste Recycling Centre (BWRC). The Chair felt that it was prudent to reconstitute the working group. A meeting would be held in January.

Councillor Wood proposed writing a letter from this Council to Cllr Mark Winnington; Cabinet Member for Economy and Infrastructure, this was seconded by the Chair, with a copy to Cllr Gill Heath, outlining the fact that this was Town Council concerned about the increasing rumours of the possible closure of BWRC, and that the Town Council fully opposed this.

Cllr Winnington would be invited to attend a future meeting of the Town Council.

Councillor Jones noted that the rumours were disturbing and that we could not let the facility go. Councillor Sheldon asked to join the working group. Proposed by Councillor Harper and seconded by Councillor Wood. This was agreed.

Councillor Lawson reported that in the last 6 years, the County Council had cut £150 million from services. It was now being asked to save a further £33 million in 20165 and in 2017 a further £50 million. The 14 Waste and recycling sites in the County cost £900,000 to run per annum. Councillors Jackson and Lawson had met informally with Mr Winnington that day and asked outright if BWRC was under threat, Mr Winnington had replied that it was under review at present. Councillor Lawson said he had a horrible feeling that they would try to close it.

Councillor Hall noted that he had asked Councillors Jackson and Lawson to ask the question. This Council should be part of this review – we had a good case before and he did not see why we could not put it again.

Councillor Rogers had taken a photograph when he had been driving to the BMRC, the photo showed the traffic jam caused by people trying to get into the site. He would email the picture to the Chief Officer to distribute.

Councillor Jackson noted that BWRC was in his division. There were just rumours to date and he had asked Cllr Winnington about this on repeated occasions. Councillor Jackson read from a copy of the County Council Financial Strategy for the next 5 years

2018-19 to make savings of £150,000;

2019-20 to make savings of £150,000;

2020-21 to make savings of £600,000.

Councillor Jackson had not heard the rumours, but had doubts. He felt this was most definitely a case of Use it or Lose it

Councillor Jackson said that the centre was so well used and that he felt so strongly that he would resign if it was his group in charge at the closure. Councillor Jackson asked that a copy of the latter be sent to Elaine Rock of BWRC Liaison Group; he was Chair. He felt that the local residents wanted the centre closed, and thought that they would be the ones complaining, which would make it easier for the County Council to close the site.

Councillor Wood said that he did not agree with the closure of services. He felt that the cost of running the site was peanuts compared to the fly tipping bill which would result from its closure.

Councillor Sheldon noted that the facility had been there for at least the last 65 years. There was no real alternative for Biddulph people and added that this flew in the face of what had been happening in Paris recently at the International Climate Change Conference. Councillor Sheldon added that she would fight her utmost to retain the facility for the benefit of everyone in Biddulph.

The Chair gave a brief resume - the working group would be reconstituted with the addition of Councillor Sheldon and a letter would be written to Cllr Winnington to express concerns and to invite him to a future meeting and to note that this Council wanted to be part of the review. Copies to Gill Heath and Elaine Rock.

Councillor Harper suggested that this Council could send a deputation to Cllr Winnington's office if he was too busy, this would be a last resort. Councillor Lovatt asked that the letters be sent forthwith. All were in favour.

80. MEETINGS ATTENDED DURING THE MONTH

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

- a Councillor Lovatt asked for an update on the hearing loop situation. The Chief Officer responded that the Officer dealing with the work was off work until January.

Councillor Hart left the meeting before discussion took place on the following item, Councillor Jones took the chair.

- b Councillor Hawley gave an update on the Neighbourhood Plan; a catch-all workshop had been held at the Town Hall. The working group had met and it had been agreed to complete a full Neighbourhood Plan. The next meeting of the working group would be held in January 2016. Councillor Hawley had met with Mr Dai Lerner and agreed to work on this together; the numbers would be available in February 2016, prior to further consultation in March.

Councillors Hawley, Harper, Court and the Chief Officer had met with planners at the District Council, information would be circulated to fellow Councillors as soon as it was received.

Councillor Wood noted that there were some improvements in the latest plans which would go before the District Council in February 2016. Some of the controversial sites would be taken out. He added that the public must participate in the next round of consultations.

Councillor Hawley clarified the timescale of the Neighbourhood Plan. Councillor Redfern felt that some interesting ideas had been put forwards, he would like to see how it would all fit together. Councillor Jones stated that until we knew the numbers it was very difficult.

Councillor Hart regained the Chair.

- d Councillor Sheldon had thoroughly enjoyed the two 'Live and Local' events which she had attended. It aimed to take Art and Theatre out to rural areas.
- e Councillor Rogers had attended a meeting of the Staffordshire Parish Councils Association in Stafford. The SPCA was asking for the cost of using the M6 toll road to be reduced to alleviate the traffic on other roads.

Councillor Rogers had attended a the special Christmas meeting of the Moorlands Assembly; it had been well worth attending.

81. LENGSTHMAN WORK

The site identified by Councillor Jackson had been attended to.

82. CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

1 Report on Springfield Road allotment site

As you are aware, the planning application was approved by the Town Council at the October meeting. Since that time, and at a very late stage, the Planning Officer has raised concerns about the site levels, land stability and drainage. He feels that the cut and fill is of a scale to be significant, both in simple volume terms and in terms of the end result, as the new slope would be significantly steeper than the existing.

He asked that an engineer be engaged to find out (a) that the ground is capable of remaining stable in the new profile, and also (b) how the implications for water table levels have been assessed and accommodated. He further noted that the site appears throughout to be 'Made Ground'.

The Town Council's Project Manager responded that he didn't fully understand how these queries were related to planning policy and that these were surely building regulation issues, which we could resolve. Our Project Manager is currently obtaining fees from structural engineers to carry out this investigation work.

He told the Planning Officer that to raise these issues at this late stage was not beneficial to the team and the community and suggested that these investigations could be added as planning conditions. The officer's response was that if conditions could resolve things we could go that route but he felt that the degree of cut and fill was quite significant – especially the cut. The nestling of the allotments in the lower area is quite critical to achieving visual acceptability of the scheme. (Which we know, and is why the scheme is as it is.) The Officer felt it critical to know that the excavations involved were achievable, in particular that the land would remain stable once excavated.

The Officer stated that should it prove that the proposed new slope would not be feasible without reinforcement a quite different scheme could be needed, with significant implications for the development control assessment.

This means that the application has now missed the committee date of 17th December. The next available committee date is 28th January, then 3rd March 2016. I completed an expression of interest form for a grant from the Tesco Local Community grants programme; however, this was dependent upon us gaining planning permission on the site by 18th January. This will now not be possible and we will lose this opportunity of applying for funds of between £8,000-£12,000.

Councillor Sheldon felt that it was disappointing and upsetting, but that we could not go ahead without this work taking place.

Councillor Jackson said it was heart sinking and took issue with the slope being steeper, it had been like that for 50 years to his knowledge, but added that this Council would have to jump through the hoops. The Chief Officer added that the engineer would be instructed to carry out the work. Councillor Jackson asked for the Allotments Committee to be convened in the New Year, this was agreed.

2 Piped gas supply – Biddulph Moor

A letter has been received from Karen Bradley MP, asking for any comments.

Councillor Jones had conducted a house to house survey and felt that there was not enough interest locally.

3 Trees outside Nos 7 & 9 Conway Road

A proposal has been received from Western Power to remove trees at the above location, in order to safeguard the power lines. Town Council opinion is being sought. The residents have been canvassed.

Councillors Redfern and Sheldon explained the situation and that this had been tried before and failed.

4 High Street Crossing

Samples of pavers have been brought in for selection by Council by the Community Highways Liaison Officer.

Members were canvassed and preferred the red brick as more of a match to the existing pavers in the town.

5 Burial Ground waste collection service

Information received from the District Council that the burial grounds and churchyards will be provided with a standard domestic service for waste and recyclables, free of charge from April 2016.

Councillor Sheldon felt that it was important to get over to the public the importance of sorting their waste at the burial grounds.

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm.

Signed Date