

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2016

In the absence of Councillor Hart, Councillor Jones took the Chair.

PRESENT

The Mayor - Councillor Baddeley
Councillor Court
Councillor Davies
Councillor Hall
Councillor Jackson
Councillor Jones – Vice Chair
Councillor Lawson
Councillor Lovatt
Councillor McGuinness
Councillor Nicosia
Councillor Sheldon
Councillor Swift
Councillor Walley
Councillor Whilding
Councillor Wood

Also in attendance:
Councillor Rogers
Councillor Harper
Councillor Hawley

91.15. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from
The Deputy Mayor - Councillor Salt
Councillor Hart - Chair
Councillor Rushton

92. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Dispensations: Councillor Sheldon declared in any matters concerning Biddulph in Bloom. Minute 97: Councillor McGuinness as churchwarden at St Lawrence's Church
- b Other Disclosable Interests. None were declared.

93. MINUTES

- a It was **Resolved** to sign the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 19 January 2016.
- b It was **Resolved** to receive the Minutes of the meeting of the Burial Grounds Committee meeting held on 9 February 2016.

94. EQUALITIES

Jude Hawes, Specialist Services & Equalities Manager from North Staffs & SOT CAB was invited to address the meeting.

Ms Hawes spoke of her work with refugees and asylum seekers mainly in the city of Stoke on Trent, giving advice and assistance. In the coming months Staffordshire

would be taking 50 Syrian refugees to be housed in Burton, Stafford and Newcastle. The programme would run until 2020, so another group may be housed in the area. Those seeking asylum must prove that they had suffered persecution in their home country and that it was not safe to return to their home country. If the application to the Home Office was successful they would be given refugee status which lasted for five years, they would be allowed to work, claim benefits etc. Some cases were decided in a month, but some had taken 10-15 years.

In the interim stage for the first six months, the asylum seeker cannot work, is not entitled to claim benefit; must register with the local police, cannot study English, is placed into accommodation with private landlords and must not be away from there for more than 48 hours. Most of the asylum seekers came from war torn countries or those with civil war, where they were on the wrong side or practiced the wrong religion or were from the wrong social group. The vast majority were middle class professionals as they were the ones who stood up to authority. Many of the single asylum seekers tended to be younger people between 14 – 16 years, who had probably left their own country in family groups.

The CAB received a small amount of funding from Stoke on Trent City Council.

Councillor Sheldon asked if there was a pathway to befriend the young single people. Ms Hawes mentioned the Lighthouse Church in Burslem and St Mark's in Shelton who were leading the way in this area.

Councillor Jackson thanked Ms Hawes for myth busting adding that he wished someone could do the same with social media.

Councillor Wood noted that this was a massive humanitarian disaster and the refugees must be treated with compassion.

Councillor McGuinness noted that a member of St Lawrence's Church was working with Sanctus and reported that one of the greatest difficulties was mastering the language.

Councillor Nicosia asked if Ms Hawes was only working with families - no, all who came forwards. Councillor Nicosia asked how many were young men – there were no statistics, it varied depending on the country and many of the African refugees were Christians.

The Chief Officer read a comment from Councillor Salt:

"I think it very important, that we as elected representatives and leaders of our community stick to the facts and play no part in scaremongering or creating a climate of fear and worry and on that note I am pleased that Jude is able to address the council this evening and dispel some myths and hopefully enlighten us all."

Councillor Jones endorsed Councillor Salt's comments and thanked Ms Hawes for attending the meeting.

95. BEMERSLEY HWRC

The Chief Officer reported that Councillors Winnington and Heath had agreed to attend the April meeting.

Councillor Wood asked if any decision had been made. Councillor Jackson replied that the budget had been decided but not the implications. Councillor Wood had heard that the Stoke super depot would result in the closure of Federation Road

recycling centre in Burslem. Councillor Wood added that he was pleased that Councillor Winnington would be attending the meeting.

Councillor Jones said that this council must make it absolutely clear to Councillor Winnington that BHWRC must not be closed.

Councillor Sheldon reminded members that rubbish must be properly separated at the site as there were issues with landfill. Councillor Lawson noted there was an example of fly tipping at Mill Hayes Road.

Councillor McGuinness felt that it was unfair that commercial waste could not be taken to BHWRC.

96. HEARING LOOP FOR THE COUNCIL CHAMBER

Information was still awaited. Councillor Hawley felt that this was beyond a joke and that more pressure must be put on Property Services. He proposed that a ballpark figure be obtained.

Councillor Lovatt proposed, seconded by Councillor Wood that a letter is written to Simon Baker at SMDC asking him to intervene as this was an equality issue, agreed, to be sent forthwith.

97. ST LAWRENCE'S CLOCK

Councillor McGuinness did not take part in discussion or voting on the following item. He was allowed to remain in the room at the discretion of the Vice Chair as it was cold on the landing

Further information had been requested.

The Chief Officer reported that the cost for and installation of an automatic winder would be £3896. The clock currently had to be wound on a weekly basis; the task was carried out by the Captain of the Belltower as the mechanism was located on the first floor of the bell tower accessed via a vertical steel ladder. If the captain was unavailable the clock stopped and it took two people to ensure that the correct time was displayed.

Several councillors asked for clarification about ongoing maintenance costs. The Chief Officer would bring details of this information to the next meeting for consideration.

98. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

No report was made.

99. MEETINGS ATTENDED DURING THE MONTH

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

- a Councillor Hawley reported on the January meeting of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group. Councillors were welcome to attend the next meeting to be held on Wednesday 24 February 2016 at 6.00 pm in the Council Chamber.

- b Councillor Lovatt reported that the lines on Wharf Road car park would be repainted in the next 2 weeks.
- c Councillor Jackson reported that the Biddulph Sports personality awards would be held on 18 March 2016 and the Staffordshire Moorlands event would be held on 1 April 2016 in the Town Hall.
- d Councillor Lawson reported that a new Chief Fire Officer would be appointed soon and the new extension to the fire station would result in a larger community room; building work had started that week.

100. LENGTHSMAN

To receive reports of highway issues suitable for the Lengthsman scheme - none received.

101. CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

1 S53 application to add a bridleway from Wedgwood Lane to Hill Lane (Bridleway No 79), Gillow Heath

A notification has been received from the County Council, with a request for evidence (if any) to add the above track to the Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way. Information requested by 22 March 2016.

2 Invitation to Chief Constable

Jane Sawyers, the Chief Constable of Staffordshire Police, has been invited to the April meeting of the Town Council. Chief Constable Sawyers has already accepted an invitation to attend the Youth Advisors meeting earlier that afternoon.

3 Clean for the Queen

Information received that the District Council is supporting this national event during February, March and April. Requests for assistance to support litter cleaning activities are to be made to Joy Redfern as soon as possible.

The meeting closed at 8.35 pm.

Signed Date