

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 17 JULY 2018

PRESENT

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

Also in attendance

Councillor Court
Councillor Harper

16.18 APOLOGIES

Councillor Hart
Councillor Jackson
Councillor Lawson
Councillor Sheldon
Councillor Swift

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- i) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests & Dispensations none declared.
- ii) Other Interests: none declared.

18. MINUTES

It was moved to sign the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on Tuesday 19 June 2018.

19. TO RECEIVE A VERBAL UPDATE ON THE DEMENTIA CINEMA EVENT AND PROGRESS WITH THE DEMENTIA ACTION PLAN

The Chief Officer reported that 25 people had come through the door; those with dementia and also their carers. Support had been provided from previous members of the Biddulph Film Club, which had been very much appreciated. There was appropriate lighting, suitable intervals; with tea and cake, comfy chairs. Positive feedback had been received. One lady had waited all her life to meet the Mayor! Several people had asked when the next one would be held.

Following the event, the Mayor had donated £150 to enable three further sessions to take place.

Councillor Rogers had been dubious to start with, but now thought that the Town Council should host more events such as these.

Councillor McGuinness proposed holding three more events, seconded by Councillor Rogers and agreed.

Town Council staff members, who were Dementia Champions, would be training 20 Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC) customer service team members the following morning, in Leek, to become Dementia Friends. The next step was to train shop owners and the aim was to make the Town Hall a dementia friendly place. It would be advertised that this Town Council could offer dementia training. The Chief Officer noted that Keen Dentists wanted to engage with this and positive steps were being taken

Councillor Salt asked when Town Councillors would be trained; and asked that a training event is pencilled in as a matter of urgency, this was seconded by Councillor Walley. Several members noted that they had already trained as Dementia Friends. The Chief Officer would email available dates, it was hoped to offer the training to members in small groups. It was noted that the training session lasts just under an hour.

Councillor Baddeley noted in her career she had nursed a lot of people with dementia; music had a very positive impact. She suggested holding an event one day a week for those living with Dementia to listen to music and dance, if possible.

Councillor McGuinness responded that St Lawrence's Church hosts 'a mind to sing' weekly; the sessions were well attended, some travelled from Crewe.

Councillor Harper noted that Sarah, Jodie and Jean had put themselves out to organise the Dementia Cinema event and this should be recognised, Councillor Jones agreed.

20. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE BIDDULPH GRANGE COUNTRY PARK (BGCP) FRIENDS

Councillor Jones reported that there would be a Bug Hunt at BGCP; where young people would find clues, answer the questions and have the chance to win a prize. No bugs would be harmed! The Leat was flowing nicely and Biddulph Town Council was in negotiations to have the Visitor Centre open again.

Councillor Salt noted that Biddulph Hiking and Mountaineering Club reported that some of the 'Biddulph Rocks' may have been thrown into the lake. They are hidden in various locations for young people to find. Councillor Jones had also heard about this; he thought that geocaching was a great idea.

21. VANDALISM AND POLICING - ITEM REQUESTED BY CLLR COURT

Councillor Court was invited to address the meeting. Councillor Court noted that there had been an encouraging Chronicle headline recently and he praised the success of the groups that were working to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB). Councillor Court reported that he was the Chair of Biddulph Rotary Youth Services and feared that town centre problems would move elsewhere; there had been reports of ASB on Newpool Meadows and Halls Road playing fields.

Councillor Court noted that some residents had expressed concern about policing in the town and that '101 was a pain in the neck'. People were worried that the move of Police Officers to the Hanley station would impact negatively on the town; he wished for more support from the powers that be. Councillor Court would like the remit of the Young People in the Town Centre Working Group to be extended to include Newpool Meadows and Halls Road playing fields.

Councillor Salt responded that she had instigated the Young People's group to encompass the whole of Biddulph; one item had been loitering in the town centre. She added that we pay Council Tax and pay for the police to patrol our streets. Councillor Salt proposed that the Town Council pay for a detached youth worker to engage with young people.

Councillor Rogers was frustrated. He felt for the Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and 6 'new Bobbies' starting in Biddulph; crime was very low in this town, so there was a low number of Police.

Councillor Wood thought it was good that the town had a low crime rate, he suggested it would increase if there were no police in the streets; no one to challenge or chastise bad behaviour. Councillor Wood thought that the response was pathetic and that the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) had a responsibility. Councillor Wood also thought that rural crime would increase as it was not seen as a priority area. Biddulph was neglected and this Council should keep banging the drum.

Councillor Jones added that feelings were the same on Biddulph Moor.

Councillor Salt noted that figures depended on how crime was reported; unless a crime number is given the crime was not counted.

Councillor Rushton added that there were lots of crimes in Biddulph, but not all were reported so the rate was low.

Councillor Harper noted that the rate was not high, but many were not reported; the police were there, but were very stretched.

Councillor Jones would add this as an item on the agenda for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel at SMDC; he knew that the police worked very hard, there were just not enough of them.

Councillor Nicosia noted that there were hotspots in Biddulph, not just in the town centre. In winter it was mostly the town centre, but in summer it was in many different areas, including Halls Road. She felt that an authority presence would possibly put some of them off. Councillor Nicosia asked if this Council could request for PCSO cover in the hotspots which we were aware of; adding that the time spent waiting on '101' can frustrate people.

Councillor Jones was sceptical that a detached youth worker would make a difference, he proposed that this is added to the Finance Committee agenda and costs sought.

Councillor Hall cautioned against this Council 'doing all things for all people' and not getting any income back from it; our reserves would soon run out.

There was discussion about PCC funding. Councillor Salt felt it would be more beneficial if BYCZ provided the youth worker and the Town Council funded it. BYCZ had used some of the PCC pot to fund SPACE activities in the summer.

Councillor Jones thought this was a central policing issue and the proposal should be costed first. The Chief Officer would seek accurate costs.

22. CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

1. Training Courses

Local Councillor Training Course – Tuesday 11 September 2018

Due to demand a re-run of the Local Councillor Training Course has been arranged for Tuesday 11 September 2018. The topics being discussed are:

- Profile of an Active Council
- Profile of a Local Councillor
- A Good Chairman
- The Role of the Clerk
- The Council as Employer
- The Law and Local Councils
- Administrative Duties
- Section 137
- Council Budgets and Precepts
- VAT
- Audit Arrangements and Fees
- Transparency Code
- What's on the Agenda
- The Localism Act 2011
- Planning
- The Nolan Principles

Date: Tuesday 11 September 2018

Time: 7.00pm – 9.00pm

Venue: Trentham / Rudyard Suite, Staffordshire Place One, Tipping Street, Stafford ST16 2LP

Cost: £20.00 for the first delegate, £15.00 for the second and £10.00 for subsequent delegates from the same affiliated council. The prices are doubled for unaffiliated councils.

It was noted that the above event was on the same day as Council Committee meetings.

2. Gillow Heath Prosecution

I have been asked to advise Councillors of a prosecution, by SMDC Pollution Officer:

I've attached the link to the prosecution we took against a local farmer in Gillow Heath. Biddulph Town Council did assist us with the original fire complaints back in 2015 and 2017 so this prosecution is the result of those complaints.

<https://www.staffs Moorlands.gov.uk/article/3812/7000-goes-up-in-smoke-for-Gillow-Heath-man>

The press release reads:

Burning waste wood at his home address has resulted in a Gillow Heath man seeing over £7,000 of his funds go up in smoke.

Newcastle magistrates found Charles Percy Shaw, of Akesmore Lane, guilty in his absence of breaching a nuisance abatement notice issued by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council on four separate days and imposed a total penalty of £7,368.02.

The original notice was served in November 2015 after a large bonfire was used to dispose of waste wood on land at Moody Street Farm. The fire, and the associated smoke, resulted in a significant number of complaints to the Council.

It was extinguished by Staffordshire Fire and Rescue service at the request of the Council's Environmental Health team. Investigations revealed that the wood had been buried into a pit in preparation for burning.

In November last year further complaints were received following another fire which took a number of days to extinguish and meant neighbours in Gillow Heath and Biddulph were unable to open windows or hang out washing for a number of days between 7 and 10 November.

It was, again, found that waste wood had been buried prior to burning which caused significant smoke emissions when lit.

Councillor Arthur Forrester, cabinet member for the environment at the Council, said: "These fires caused significant inconvenience to neighbours with the impact of the smoke lasting for days and preventing those living nearby from carrying out every day, domestic activities.

"This is clearly a situation that we cannot allow to happen and we welcome the decision of the court to impose this substantial penalty. It sends out a clear message that we won't tolerate such inconsiderate behaviour and I hope will act as a strong deterrent to prevent similar incidents in the future."

Magistrates imposed a fine of £1,000 for failure to comply with the notice issued on 6 November 2017 and a further £100 for similar failures on 7, 8 and 9 November.

Council costs of £1,278.66 were awarded together with a compensation order of £4,689.36 for Staffordshire Fire and Rescue and a £100 victim surcharge resulting in a total penalty of £7,368.02.

3. Draft Growth Strategy

The Draft Staffordshire Moorlands Growth Strategy has been developed by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and Staffordshire County Council and sets out a plan for sustainable growth and identifies development opportunities over the next 15 years. It has been prepared to provide the strategic vision and context to development proposed in the Local Plan and identifies key actions to achieve this vision.

The Draft Strategy is now open for public consultation and we welcome comments from partners, stakeholders and the general public. Deadline for responses: 24th August 2018 – please send comments/responses either to me or regeneration@staffs Moorlands.gov.uk or <https://www.staffs Moorlands.gov.uk/article/3801/Growth-Strategy>

4. Diversion of Vehicular Traffic

TROUGHSTONES ROAD, BIDDULPH COMMON

The order will come into operation on 13 August 2018 for water main and service renewal works undertaken by Amey on behalf of Severn Trent Water, which it is proposed to carry out on or near the road have been completed.

5. Review of Lengthsman Provision

Over the summer months there will be a review of the current Lengthsman contract, in order that the General Purposes Committee should receive recommendations in September 2018. Please send your comments to the Chief Officer as soon as possible.

The meeting closed at 8.12 pm

Signed Date