

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2018

PRESENT

The Mayor Councillor McGuinness
The Deputy Mayor – Councillor Davies
Councillor Baddeley
Councillor Hall
Councillor Hart
Councillor Jackson
Councillor Jones
Councillor Lawson
Councillor Lovatt
Councillor Nicosia
Councillor Rogers
Councillor Rushton
Councillor Salt
Councillor Sheldon
Councillor Swift
Councillor Walley
Councillor Whilding
Councillor Wood

Also in attendance

Councillor Court

23.18 APOLOGIES

None.

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- i) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests & Dispensations: Councillor Sheldon in anything pertaining to Biddulph in Bloom
- ii) Other Interests: none declared.

25. MINUTES

- a) It was moved to sign the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on Tuesday 17 July 2018.
- b) It was moved to receive the Notes from the Town Deal meeting held on Friday 8 June 2018.
- c) It was moved to receive the Minutes of the meeting of the Burial Grounds Sub-Committee held on Monday 11 June 2018.
- d) It was moved to receive the Minutes of the meeting of the Burial Grounds Sub-Committee held on Tuesday 11 September 2018.
- e) It was moved to receive the Minutes of the meeting of the Allotments Sub-Committee held on Wednesday 11 July 2018.
- f) It was moved to receive the Notes from the meeting of the Bus Working Group held on Tuesday 7 August 2018.
Councillor Lawson queried why he and Councillor Flunder had not been invited to this meeting. Councillor Jones noted that this was a Biddulph Town Council

Working Group, which would liaise as required. The next meeting would be on 25 September 2018. Councillor Lawson would pass this message on.

26. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE BIDDULPH GRANGE COUNTRY PARK FRIENDS

Councillor Jones updated members that the 'log-jam' appeared to have been unclogged and discussions were progressing with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust (SWT) about the management of the twelve sites across the Staffordshire Moorlands. Councillor Jones hoped that the agreement would be honoured with regard to the involvement with of the Friends Group and the Town Council. An email exchange between Keith Parker at the District Council and Jeff Simms at SWT indicated that there would be input from the Town Council.

The Chief Officer advised that she had been asked to liaise directly with the SWT in relation to the lease of the Visitor Centre. Councillor Jones noted that SWT had no interest in managing this.

27. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON LEEK AND MOORLANDS HOSPITAL

Councillor Jones updated members that this issue had been discussed at length at the recent District Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. The District Council objects to the closure of Leek and Moorlands Hospital and has pledged to continue to lobby the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG); however, they do not appear to be listening.

Councillor Hart stated that he could not understand the logic of closing bedspaces at Leek and Moorlands Hospital; they were playing politics and moving money around.

Councillor Salt noted that it was the Health and Social Care Act of 2012 that gave Marcus Warnes (Accountable Officer) his job. Councillor Salt stated that Bradwell Hospital was now open again as a result of inadequate provision elsewhere; this is a farcical situation. It is privatisation through the back door.

Councillor Wood noted that one person was making decisions and he was not elected; it was 'his way or no way'. He is making decisions to suit his budget. When a service is 'gone, it's gone'. It is a scandal.

Councillor Jones stated that consultation was undertaken, but the CCG did not listen. Marcus Warnes is not a clinician; he is a 'bean counter'. Recent decisions have caused bed-blocking at University Hospital of North Staffordshire; people have nowhere to go.

Councillor Salt noted that this was not Marcus Warnes' fault; he has been allowed to do this. The system has allowed him to create an empire. If the Tory government goes, this legislation will change.

28. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON FORTHCOMING DEMENTIA CINEMA SESSIONS

The Chief Officer noted that the 'Sound of Music' would be showing on Tuesday 2 October, and 'White Christmas' would be shown in the week before Christmas.

29. TO RECEIVE FEEDBACK FOLLOWING VISIT TO WERRINGTON WELLBEING CENTRE AND LIBRARY

The Chief Officer tabled documents that had been sent from Councillor David Shaw in relation to Werrington Library.

On 12 September 2018, the Chief Officer and Events and Partnerships Officer were welcomed to Werrington Community Library and Wellbeing Centre. Officers made the following observations:

- There was a voluntary group in place prior to the Staffordshire County Council withdrawal of staff from the library; it takes three volunteers at a time to run the library.
- The County pay for the building and the maintenance of it. There was an agreement that utility bills would be paid for the first five years and would then become the responsibility of the Centre.
- The charity shop within the Centre makes a significant amount of money. They also receive revenue from the photocopier and library fines. There is now a surplus that means the Centre could run for 10 years, without additional funding.
- Grant funding is sought for projects, not to run the Centre.
- The volunteers are supported by the library HQ system and County Council Stock Officer. They received a 5-week induction session before taking over the centre.
- The volunteers soon realised they needed to attract a younger clientele to the library as most previous users were 70+. Since this time they have increased new membership by 8.7%. 2500 people come through the door every month currently.
- The volunteers have coordinated 900 activities in just over two years, including lifestyle and baby activities.

There were similarities with Biddulph in terms of the proximity to the Health Centre, but differences in relation to the size of the set-up and involvement of volunteers. It would be useful to have this information for future reference.

Councillor Hart noted that this may be an alternative way to go.

Councillor Jones stated that this Council would oppose any changes to library provision, but this model could be a 'Plan B'.

Councillor Salt wondered whether this information should be sent to the Biddulph Library for their thoughts.

30. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON CURRENT LENGTHSMAN PROVISION AND RECOMMENDATIONS GOING FORWARD

The Chief Officer had asked for feedback from Councillors at the previous General Purposes Committee meeting. The following information was tabled, for consideration:

Background

In August 2017, the Town Council approved a new Lengthsman contract that would be funded directly by Biddulph Town Council. This commenced on 1 September 2017 for a twelve-month period, with the option to extend following review.

Review

Funding spent to date- 1 April 2018 to 18 September 2018	£2983 (£867 spent September 2017- March 2018)
Total Budget	£5000
Complaints received	None
Flexibility provided regarding timescales and projects completed	Yes
Range of projects completed	Strimming of paths and alleyways, grass cutting, clearance of overgrown areas, repair of a tap, removal of excess soil at burial ground

Also, it is noteworthy that due to a planned absence by the operative that supports Biddulph in Bloom, the Lengthsman and his associate supported the preparation of sites in Biddulph to prepare the town for the annual judging.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the current relationship is extended for a further 12 months (until September 2019). This will give the opportunity to establish what budget provision and approach will be necessary if there are further cuts in relation to highways maintenance in 2019/2020.

Councillor Wood moved the recommendation. It is important to extend this provision; he may have a full-time role if verge cutting is completely removed by the County Council.

Councillor Jackson felt this was inevitable and noted that £7,500 paid to County Councillors had already been removed. The Town Council may have to extend this beyond this financial year.

Councillor Hart seconded the proposal. This was a worthy contract and had worked successfully. It should be monitored going forward.

All were in favour of extending this for a further year, and reviewing at the end of this period, with a view to continuing or extending provision.

Councillor Jones reminded Councillors that if the Lengthsman is not asked to complete a task, he cannot do it. This should be a standing item on the General Purposes Committee agenda.

Councillor Salt noted that the alleyway on St John's Road to Knowle Road needed some attention.

Councillor Hart felt that the path between St Lawrence's Church and Marsh Green Road should be considered.

Councillor Lovatt felt that footpath issues should be referred to the County Council, in the first instance. If this has not been completed within a couple of weeks, it could be referred to the lengthsman.

31. CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

1. Police and Crime Commissioner update

Youth ASB down in Staffordshire Moorlands due to success of Space 2018

The Space scheme has been hailed a huge success after the number of youth anti-social behaviour incidents in Staffordshire Moorlands dropped by more than nine per cent.

Space was introduced by the Staffordshire Commissioner for Police, Fire and Rescue and Crime, Matthew Ellis, to bring together public, voluntary and private sector organisations to help nurture, support and guide youngsters across the county.

This year's programme was the most ambitious and successful yet with a record number of places for eight-to-17-year-olds being filled during the summer holiday period throughout Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

Initial figures show a county-wide reduction in police-recorded youth-related anti-social behaviour incidents throughout Staffordshire, with a 41 per cent drop on last year – which was on top of a significant drop between 2016 and 2017.

There were 1110 recorded youth-related ASB incidents in the county in 2017, with 659 registered this summer.

In Staffordshire Moorlands there were 68 recorded youth-related ASB incidents during the recent summer holidays – compared to 75 during the corresponding period last year.

Councillor Wood had a problem with the wording in this press release. The statement about 'police-recorded' ASB is not the experience of people locally, who get fed up of hanging on the phone. Repeat crimes are not recorded.

Councillor Jones reiterated that people should report issues to ensure the Police don't think that nothing is happening in Biddulph.

Councillor Salt felt that this was an insult to the other organisations across the Staffordshire Moorlands that work with young people; it is disrespectful.

Councillor Hart had never had a problem making 101 calls; Councillor Jones had.

Councillor Jackson felt that this was arrogant. The Town Council should write and point out that many organisations can claim success. It was the Police that originally stopped the SPACE scheme. The letter should say that the Town Council is taken aback by the boastful claim.

Councillor Jones noted the important work of the Scouts, for example, that meet all year, not just in the Summer.

Councillor Salt seconded the proposal from Councillor Jackson.

There was a vote and this was agreed.

2. Biddulph Youth & Community Zone Limited- notice of Annual General Meeting

To be held on Thursday 20 September 2018 at 6pm at Biddulph Youth and Community Zone, Church Road, Biddulph, ST8 6NE

3. Please see CONFIDENTIAL tabled update from meeting with Keith Parker- Head of Operational Services, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

The Chief Officer tabled a document that had been agreed that day, containing the notes from her meeting with Keith Parker. It was moved to discuss the content of this confidentially; all agreed, and the press and public left the meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm

Signed Date