

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF BIDDULPH TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2018

The Chief Officer introduced the Town Mayor and Deputy Mayor; Pastor Amy Wyatt was invited to lead a time of prayer. The Mayor opened the meeting and informed Councillors that ex-Councillor Gannon's wife had passed away; the Town Council sends its best wishes to the family.

PRESENT

The Mayor Councillor McGuinness
The Deputy Mayor – Councillor Davies
Councillor Baddeley
Councillor Court
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

28.18 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The meeting to adjourn for up to 20 minutes (Standing Order 1d-f) to allow for public participation. Residents are invited to give their views and question the Town Council on issues on this agenda, or raise issues for future consideration at the discretion of the Mayor.

Members of the public wishing to raise issues which are not on the Agenda should notify the Chief Officer five working days before the meeting. Members of the public may not take part in the Council meeting itself.

None.

29. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence and reasons accepted were received from:

Councillor Harper
Councillor Hawley

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a) To declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests & Dispensations: Councillor Sheldon in anything pertaining to Biddulph in Bloom. Councillor Rogers had a mileage claim that would be approved as part of the supplementary accounts.
- b) To declare any Other Disclosable Interests: Councillor Hall noted that he was not the 'Mr Hall' detailed on the Accounts and Finance section of the agenda.

31. MINUTES

- a) It was moved to approve and sign the Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council held on 17 July 2018. Councillor Court noted that he had been present at the meeting; the minutes were amended.
- b) It was moved to receive the Minutes of the General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 17 July 2018.
- c) It was moved to approve and sign the Minutes of the meeting of the Town Council held on 20 July 2018
- d) It was moved to approve and sign the Minutes of the meeting of the Finance Committee held on 20 August 2018
- e) It was moved to approve and sign the Minutes of the Committee Structure Working Group meeting held on 23 August 2018. Councillor Rogers asked if the next meeting could take place at a later time.
- f) It was moved to receive the Minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held on 16 August 2018.
- g) It was moved to receive the Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 11 September 2018
- h) It was moved to receive the Minutes of the Civic Committee Meeting held on 11 September 2018. Councillor Davies wished to make an amendment to the confidential section of the minutes; he would raise this briefly in the confidential section of this meeting. All agreed.

32. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor noted that he had attended the first Dementia Cinema session, which had been well received; there would be another event in October. The Mayor had discussed this event and the Lifeline public meeting on Moorlands Radio; there had been an open meeting on 8 August 2018. Rev'd Dyson had offered the St Lawrence's Church Hall rooms for further training on defibrillators and CPR.

The Mayor had attended an Air Training Corps meeting to present the grant cheque. This funding would help with the purchase of computers and a mini-bus.

The Mayor had attended Councillor Swift's 80th birthday party. In addition, he had laid a wreath at St Edward's Church in Leek as part of the Battle of Britain memorial event.

The Mayor had attended the Christian Aid market at the weekend and had been approached by two members of the Volunteer Transport scheme; this Council had previously supported them with grant funding and received a presentation on their activities. They had just received a letter from Support Staffordshire to say that from April there would be no further financial support for the scheme.

The Mayor had a copy of this letter and noted that there were 5816 car journeys throughout Staffordshire in the previous year. He had invited the representatives to speak in the next public participation section in October. It was noted that these representatives take Biddulph residents to hospital and wait for them. This had been useful when the 93 bus had been out of commission.

33. ITEM REQUESTED BY COUNCILLOR SALT- STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL FUNDING CUTS, INCLUDING SCHOOL CROSSING PATROLS

Councillor Salt reminded Councillors that they had found out about the proposed cuts via the Sentinel website at the Civic Committee meeting the previous week. These proposals were a forewarning of what could be expected. The proposal was to remove all funding for School Crossing Patrols across the County. Councillor Salt reminded Councillors that this did not include Stoke-on-Trent.

As a parent, Councillor Salt was very upset. Having done a finger-tip count, she believed there were 9 School Crossing Patrols in Biddulph, and all were needed.

On Woodhouse Lane, there is a blind bend. On Park Lane there is a heavily used set of traffic lights. At St John's Road, oncoming traffic cannot see effectively because of the camber of the road.

Councillor Salt was irritated by the suggestion that Town and Parish Councils could 'pick up the bill' and reminded Councillors that the Town Council also experienced cuts. The suggestion was that schools could also pick up the bill. As a parent, Councillor Salt was currently required to pay £10 per half term for her child to have a drink of squash; the financial difficulties are such that parents are already having to pay for their children to go to school, in one form or another. Schools cannot afford to pay for books.

As for volunteers carrying out the function of the School Crossing Patrol, with the idea of the 'Big Society', the good people of the town were already at capacity. At the Town Council's Volunteer Event, people had not been 'battering down the doors'.

Councillor Salt wished to propose that a strongly worded letter is sent to Staffordshire County Council condemning suggested School Crossing Patrol cuts. Councillor Salt had set up a petition and urged Councillors to sign this and share it. Over 2700 people had signed it currently from across the County. Councillors should stand with the School Crossing Patrols and collect signatures.

As a final point, Councillor Salt had checked traffic regulations and noted that it was a statutory responsibility of the County to buy equipment, provide appropriate training and to ensure that satisfactory checks were carried out. If these activities had not taken place, the School Crossing Patrol warden would risk being fined. Volunteers would not wish to undertake this activity. The proposals from Staffordshire County Council were 'disgusting'.

Councillor Jackson wished to formally second the proposal, but reserved the right to speak later.

Councillor Jones was wary of what was reported in the papers and wished for more information about the proposals. Councillor Wood provided a point of clarification that the Staffordshire County Council Cabinet Member had appeared on the television; the proposals were as Councillor Salt had described.

Councillor Jones noted that, that being the case, he fully supported Councillor Salt; this was 'outrageous'. He noted that there was currently a School Crossing Patrol by the Rose and Crown pub on Biddulph Moor, at the cross-roads. It would be chaos without this warden. 'We don't have to wait until a kiddy is flat on the road'.

Councillor Nicosia thanked Councillor Salt for her proposal and noted that there maybe some overlap with what she wished to speak about.

Councillor Nicosia noted that it was the responsibility of Staffordshire County Council to provide training and to approve School Crossing Patrols. There was an annual fee of £1500 per site for uniform, etc.

As regards the idea that schools could fund this activity, there is not one school locally that could afford to pay School Crossing Patrols; all are struggling to 'balance the books'. Schools could bid to funding pots, but it is the role of the schools to provide education. School salary commitments have changed significantly as a result of changes to minimum wage and enhanced pension contributions; schools have not seen an increase in their budgets to compensate for this.

Schools pay 8% of their budget to the Local Authority for services; Councillor Nicosia questioned how this was actually used.

Councillor Nicosia noted a long list of costs that were funded by schools, and stated that teachers were using their own money to fund the displays in their classrooms.

Councillor Nicosia noted that on one morning, 140 pedestrians had crossed at James Bateman Junior High School, in a 10-minute period; this was hazardous to negotiate. There is no safe place to cross by Biddulph High School. It is essential that Schools Crossing Patrols remain; this is 'essential' funding for the County Council.

Councillor Nicosia felt that County Councillors must speak out and represent the people that put them there.

Councillor Wood thanked Councillor Nicosia for the information she had provided, and noted that teachers had only had a pay increase because there had been no public sector pay increase previously. The whole funding mechanism in relation to education needs to be resolved.

Councillor Wood recalled when he had been on the Finance Committee at Stoke-on-Trent City Council. One idea had been to stop gritting the roads; he had responded that this was a 'novel way to resign'. Councillor Wood felt that Philp Atkins should consider this. These proposals would put lives at risk; they were 'penny pinching'. It is always the lowest paid workers that are penalised the most.

Councillor Wood noted that central government could find the money for the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and for the new 'HS2' rail system, but could not find enough money to properly support the education system. Biddulph had lost a number of facilities; the 'fabric of society is under threat'. The Town Council has reserves, but where does this end.

Councillor Wood's grandson was now at James Bateman Junior High School; he had been allowed to cross the road without his parents, but if there was no School Crossing Patrol his parents would not permit this, which would remove his independence.

There was a brief exchange about the use of the County Councillor Community Fund, and confirmation was provided that this is also due to be removed as part of the budget proposals.

Councillor Wood felt that something fundamental has to change; it is as if children are not as important as other individuals. He hoped that Staffordshire County Council would make representations to central government.

Councillor Lawson had listened with interest to the discussions. The County Council were the 'villains of the piece'. The proposals had been brought forward by Helen Fisher who

was a 'tough little cookie'. County Councillors would have the opportunity to discuss, reflect and talk about the options. A deficiency in the budget of £35million has to be filled.

Councillor Lawson queried whether Councillor Salt had an understanding of health and social care provision. The first responsibility of the County Council is care of the elderly, sick and children. The Community Fund and Divisional Highways Payment (DHP) will be removed. This is £450,000 saved with each pot. This would cause damage locally if contributions of £500 here and there were not possible across Biddulph.

If the money could not be found to fill the gap in funding, old people would be in their beds covered in their own excrement as carers cannot be afforded. There would be kids in rags on the streets, and homes that would have to close.

Councillor Lawson and his colleagues would fight hard. He had two years left as a County Councillor and then he would be finished, but he would fight.

Councillor Rogers felt it was about prioritising; money is not used effectively. Traffic enforcement officers are looking for something to do between 8.30am and 9.30am. This resource could be diverted to the School Crossing Patrols. Councillor Hart noted, as a point of clarification, that this was a Stoke-on-Trent City Council resource.

Councillor Jackson noted the 'impassioned' speech from Councillor Lawson, but queried whose 'fault' this current situation was. The government has starved the District and County Councils for years; they have been cut to the bone and are now in the 'marrow of the bone'. Councillor Jackson wondered whether the budget proposals had been announced this early to put pressure on central government. The County Council is aware that they don't have to break the news this early.

Councillor Jackson stated that The Rt Hon Theresa May MP had shaken the money tree to find £10billion for Northern Irish politicians.

Philip Atkins (Chief Executive of Staffordshire County Council) had 'stuck his chest out' and proudly announced low Council Tax. 'A touch on the tiller' would mean that there would have been money in the pot now.

Councillor Jackson noted that Councillor Nicosia had eloquently talked about school budgets. He was loath for the Town Council to be put in a position where they look like the 'bad guys' if this service isn't funded. Councillor Jackson queried where this would stop.

There are five different strands to the cuts; one significant additional cut was the management of grass verges. Councillor Jackson noted that the grass would be higher than the children, who would have no help.

The Town Council should send a letter and say we will not fund this; it is a Staffordshire County Council duty to fund School Crossing Patrols. The Town Council should get the MP involved; all Staffordshire MPs should put some pressure on the 'daft house' in London. This current situation is because of austerity; the first child injured would 'not be on our hands'.

Councillor Salt added a point of personal clarification; understanding health and social care provision had been her 'life's work'.

Councillor Lawson offered to present the petition and letter from the Town Council.

Councillor McGuinness summarised that Biddulph would lose the School Crossing Patrols, voluntary sector transport scheme, bus provision and maintenance of highways. He

suggested that the Town Council should oppose all cuts, not just the removal of the School Crossing Patrols.

Councillor Lovatt felt this was a 'bad move' as this would dilute the Town Council's response. It is not right to lump this issue in with the others.

Councillor Salt reiterated her proposal; that the Town Council should write a strongly worded letter condemning the proposed removal of the School Crossing Patrols across Staffordshire, and noting that the Town Council would not pay. This should be done forthwith.

There was a named vote; all in attendance voted in favour of the proposal. Councillor Lovatt suggested that the letter should include that there had been unanimous support for this from the Town Council.

34. ACCOUNTS & FINANCE

a) The following accounts were received for payment between the meeting cycle

Expenditure in excess of £500

Staffordshire County Council First half of contribution to service 93 bus Running between Biddulph Moor and Gillow Heath	5954.36
RPS Consulting Services Ltd Transport Consultancy	1415.76
R Standell Drainage and subsequent works in burial ground	980.00
Office Bridge Solutions Phoenix fire ranger steel storage cupboard Authority granted at Finance Committee May 2018	1629.30

Expenditure below £500

SLCC Additional membership	50.00
Barry Harrison Plumbing supplies for Park Lane allotment site Work carried out by plot holders	239.40
Tidysite Skip at Woodhouse Burial Ground, fortnightly collection	20.10
Mr Hall Supplies for repositioning of Mayoral photographs	10.03
Kent County Council Photocopy charges	313.52

R Standell	351.00
Lengthsman work for July	
Npower	35.35
Christmas lights metred supply standing costs	
Staffordshire Parish Councils Association	20.00
Councillor Training at Kidsgrove	
Countrywide Grounds Maintenance Limited	
Maintenance at Springfield Road site, April, May, June, July 2018	227.20
Maintenance at Springfield Road site – August 2018	56.80
Smith of Derby	280.80
Service visit at St Lawrence’s clock	

Credit card payments

Shutterstock	19.00
Clip art monthly charge	
Filmbank	99.60
Hire of Singin’ in the Rain for dementia cinema	
Vistaprint	97.48
Neighbourhood Plan Postcard questionnaires to be handed out at Biddulph Grange	

b) Accounts received for payment in September

Expenditure in excess of £500

Biddulph in Bloom	6250.00
Second of four instalments of grant payment	
Urban Vision	4200.00
Neighbourhood Plan support	
Kent County Council	582.64
Quarterly rental of photocopier	
Bp architecture	960.00
Technical design and tender preparation for works at Station Road	

Expenditure below £500

Market imprest	180.00
Stall construction and dismantling	
ASH waste services	218.28
Emptying 4 x bins at Town Burial Ground	
Brian Carter	40.00
Un/lock Woodhouse Burial Ground gates	
Water plus	

Town Burial Ground	86.88
Woodhouse Burial Ground	33.58
Countrywide Grounds Maintenance Grass cutting at Springfield Road September 2018	56.80
Bourne International Contour ball pen in three colours with Biddulph logo	216.00
Moorside Memorials Work at burial ground	25.00
AJ Environmental Annual mole contract at Woodhouse Burial Ground	280.00

Credit card payments

Shutterstock	19.00
Clip art monthly charge	
Argos	469.99
Lenovo laptop	
Amazon	319.99
Epson data projector	
Facebook	14.00
Town tour boost	

c) Supplementary accounts (tabled)

Expenditure above £500

Salaries	5039.45
HMRC to be paid 1 October 2018	1835.06
Staffs Pension Fund	1995.43
RH Traffic Management Ltd Production of traffic management plans Manufacture of signage Installation and removal of signage for market	649.08
R Standell Lengthsman work August to September 2018	572.00
ADB Gardencare Half year maintenance costs for burial grounds	9900.00

Expenditure below £500

Ironage Designs Sand down and revamp existing war memorial railing	344.32
So Marketing Centenary Commemorations leaflet design	312.00
S Haydon Travel- various meetings and training sessions	78.06

J Hancock	9.36
Travel for market	
J Gaunt	17.46
Travel to burial ground for interments and meetings	
Cllr Rogers	26.20
Travel- SPCA meeting in Stafford	
S Haydon	11.48
Postage costs for 7 agendas	
Petty Cash	52.40

The meeting adjourned at 7.55pm and the Chair of the General Purposes Committee took the Chair.

The meeting reconvened following the General Purposes Committee.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

Exclusion of the Press and Public

The Chair to move:-

“That, pursuant to Section 100A(2) and (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings whereby it is likely that confidential information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act would be disclosed to the public in breach of the obligation of confidence or exempt information as defined in Section 10 I (1) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act would be disclosed to the public by virtue of the Paragraphs indicated.”

The meeting closed at 8.52 pm

Signed Date