

**NOTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING  
BIDDULPH  
TUESDAY 21 MAY 2024, 6PM  
HELD AT BIDDULPH TOWN HALL, HIGH STREET, BIDDULPH ST8 6AR**

**PRESENT:**

- **The Mayor:**  
Councillor N R Yates
- **Deputy Mayor**  
Councillor A C Lawton
- Councillor N Eardley
- Councillor S Fletcher
- Councillor J I M Garvey
- Councillor A K Harper
- Councillor A H Hart
- Councillor D J Hawley
- Councillor F A Holdsworth
- Councillor M A Hopkins
- Councillor K J Jackson
- Councillor J T Jones
- Councillor A C W Parkes
- Councillor W Rogers
- Councillor Rushton
- Councillor Salt
- Councillor C Smith
- Councillor C Wood

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

- Sarah M Haydon – Chief Officer (Minute Taker)
- Jodie Hancock – Events and Partnerships Officer
- Angela Williams – Administration Officer
- Margaret Warman – Governance and Compliance Officer
- Susan Booth – Customer Support Assistant
- John Robinson – Biddulph Town Crier
- 2 members of the public

**1. Apologies**

- Councillor C Brady (Absent)
- Councillor C Kisicki (Absent)
- Councillor D Proudlove

The Mayor, Councillor Yates, recited the disclaimer regarding the recording of the meeting.

**2. To confirm the minutes of the last Annual Town Meeting held on Tuesday 23rd May 2023**

Moved by Councillor Jones; seconded by Councillor Harper. All agreed.

### **3. Presentation of the Annual Report and achievements from 2023-24 by the Town Mayor**

Councillor Yates read highlights of the draft report, which reflects achievements and challenges during the period of 2023-24.

At the start of 2023-24 we welcomed seven new Councillors to Biddulph Town Council. At the start of their term of office, we spent some time establishing priorities for the next five years and creating a new five-year strategy.

Other points of note were:

- In 2023, we received a silver award from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA). The Town Council was also shortlisted in the 'infrastructure' category for the Let's Celebrate Towns Visa awards.
- At the end of 2023, the local planning authority asked the people of Biddulph to vote in a referendum to adopt (or not) the Biddulph Neighbourhood Plan and Neighbourhood Development Order. These documents have been created by the community to ensure that, where there is development, this is the right development in the right places. Following a 'yes' vote for both documents, these documents now form part of the local planning policy.
- The Council team visited a range of venues across the town to speak to people over the age of 50. Face-to-face consultation, online and paper surveys collected important data that aims to make sure that over 50-year-olds have access to the right services and support, and that they can plan effectively for the years to come. The outcome of this study is a list of recommendations for future action and investment.
- UK Shared Prosperity Funding has also been granted to support the provision of events, and for improvements to the town centre. These activities will be delivered in 2024-25. One of these activities will be the development of a town centre square. We gained planning permission for this in 2023, with the work being scheduled for summer 2024.
- In 2022, the Town Council led a partnership that became known as 'Biddulph Works Together'. This began as a group of local organisations that were looking to coordinate efforts in relation to the cost-of-living crisis and has become something much more important. Throughout 2023-24 these services have continued to provide warm spaces and free food (funded by the Town Council), but also make a significant contribution towards tackling loneliness and social isolation, making vital connections to ensure services are delivered as efficiently as possible.

- Our Environment and Climate Change Working Group completed a consultation in relation to local priorities. These will form part of the action plan that will guide the Town Council's environmental work.
- During 2023-24, Biddulph Town Hall continued to be a hub for community activity. Dougie Mac joined the Town Hall partnership in June 2023, offering support to patients, carers and family members who cannot get to the hospice. In January 2024, we were delighted to welcome Citizens Advice to the Town Hall. The team now use this as a base for drop-ins, Biddulph appointments and casework. The Town Hall reception is a Community Help Point, with the aspiration of being able to deal with or signpost customers in relation to a wide range of issues.
- We continued to work with young people during 2023-24.
- Biddulph Town Council hosts and supports a wide number of events in the Town Hall and on the High Street.
- We are determined to preserve and enhance current heritage features in the town. In 2023-24, we restored the platform edge at the Gillow Heath Smokies Way site. We also started a lovely partnership with the Trent Valley Trust who are linking footpaths across the length of the river Trent.
- In addition to projects that we plan throughout the course of the year, we maintain a large burial site, two allotment sites and several areas of green space. We fund the 93-bus service, offered by D&G. We are also responsible for the annual servicing of three public clocks within the town.
- We commenced work on the plans for the new Garden of Remembrance at the Woodhouse Burial Ground.
- Our allotment sites continue to be full, with around 30 people on the waiting list. Current allotment holders met at the start of 2024 to agree priorities for development for 2024-25.

Councillor Yates reported the audit process had commenced; draft accounts would be added to this document in due course.

#### **4. Presentation on Town Council current areas of work, including feedback from other organisations celebrating anniversaries this year.**

The Chief Officer reported that the Town Council is working with partners who are also celebrating 50-year anniversaries. So far, YouTube 'interviews' are planned with Biddulph Amateur Swimming Club and the Fire Service

Councillor Yates invited the current Chairs of each of the Town Councils committees to report back on the previous year's achievements:

##### Finance Strategy and Management Committee

Councillor Rogers gave a brief update, explaining that the Committee has discussed activities that have impacted a number of areas within the town, including:

Burial Grounds, Bus Hub, 93 Bus, Biddulph Works Together, Regeneration of the Town Hall frontage, green spaces and much more.

Councillor Rogers noted that the energy costs for the assets have been monitored. He stated that the Town Council managed to keep the precept low; only approving a £2.99 increase. Councillor Rogers gave his thanks to the staff of the Town Council.

##### Planning Committee

Councillor Hawley reported that the Committee continues to comment on the planning applications that come from Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. The main achievement of the planning committee this year was the adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan and Neighbourhood Development Order, alongside the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group. Councillor Hawley reported that a Working Group has been established to continue this work. Councillor Jones expressed his thanks to the Planning Committee, Working Group and the Chief Officer for the huge achievements.

##### Recreation and Amenities Committee

Councillor Hart gave a brief update on the work of the Committee. He explained that the committee oversees the operational services provided by the Town Council: allotment sites, burial grounds and green spaces. Councillor Hart stated that this year they met with allotment holders and implemented a number of improvements, reviewed all burial paperwork and policies. The Committee feeds into the work of the lengthsman; Councillor Hart emphasised how important that role is for Biddulph.

Councillor Hart reported that a site visit to the Butterfly Garden was completed, which identified a number of priorities. He noted that work had commenced on a section of the Trent Valley Way and that works had been commissioned to design a new garden of remembrance at Woodhouse Burial Ground.

Councillor Hart stated that a new programme of memorial testing across the burial grounds (including churchyard) had begun. He expressed his thanks for the committee members for their hard work and extended these thanks to the Town Council staff.

### Town and Community Committee

Councillor Smith gave a brief description of the work of the Committee; the work relates to the town centre management, tourism and community activities. Councillor Smith expressed that she is proud of the work that has been undertaken by the committee this year: a research project for a library of things; ongoing Biddulph works together project; analysis of the Biddulph Works Together project completed by Jill Salt, which produced; compiled and sold a Biddulph Calendar in memory of the late Tony Lally; completed a feasibility study on priorities of those over 50-years old, which also produced recommendations to be actioned; approval given for establishing a Friday night film club, working with Film Hub.

Councillor Smith stated that she is very proud of the achievements of the past year.

### **5. Open Forum- To discuss any other issues raised by any elector present.**

A member of Public raised a question:

The gentleman questioned whether there was an economic development committee. He stated that Biddulph used to be home to many important industries such as the quarry, Greenwoods, mills, Selectus- which created many of jobs for the town. He stated that Biddulph falls in the coalfield area category, however, the Levelling up funding was not achieved.

Councillor Yates noted that the population is declining in our town and that young people are moving away. Councillor Yates stated that the District Council is very supportive, as is the Town Council.

Councillor Garvey stated that the new administration at Staffordshire Moorlands District Council has established a new committee and is moving to form a growth strategy, focusing on different transport options, affordable housing and to understand where we are and what can be done to develop business opportunities. He stated that there aren't enough opportunities for the younger generation or enough housing.

Councillor Salt agreed and explained that citizens need to be aware that some land will need to be freed up to build the industrial units. She reported that the previous District Council did not put in a bid to the Levelling up fund, however, some UK shared prosperity fund has been invested within the town.

The Chief Officer reported that a question had been sent in by residents of New Buildings which raised concerns, the concerns were read by the Chief Officer:

*1- street name/sign, we had one years ago on the patch of grass as you enter, it was knocked down possibly 15 years ago, and never replaced, can we have a road sign back, we were told we could have one but heard nothing.*

*2. Issues with a 5 bed HMO that has been allowed for released prisoners.*

*3- The residents of new buildings feel like the council no longer care, we use to have a road name sign, a grit bin as getting out when the weather is icy can be a nightmare, apparently, we no longer qualify? we had planters with lovely flowers on the railings. We now have nothing, just ex-prisoners in an HMO causing hell for residents, [a] car wash who look after nothing leaving rubbish around, causing issues along the path to the road due to all the chemicals.*

Councillor Wood declared an interest as a relative lives in the properties.

Councillor Jones expressed his concern in hearing this, he suggested that a letter could be written to support the residents.

Councillor Redfern stated that planters were provided previously, and suggested a discussion with Biddulph in Bloom as to whether planters could be returned.

Councillor Salt proposed that Town Council should consider writing to the residents to refer the signage issue to the District Councillor, referring the gritting situation to Councillor Flunder and suggesting that the residents make contact with Biddulph in Bloom to discuss planters-working in partnership with them. A letter should also be written to the MP and Police Fire and Crime Commissioner in relation to the HMO; seconded by Councillor Jones. **Agreed.**

*The Meeting ended at 7.02pm*

Signed..... Date.....