

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

PRESENT

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

95.17 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence and reasons accepted were received from:

Councillor Rushton
Councillor Swift

96. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Dispensations: Councillor Sheldon anything pertaining to Biddulph in Bloom. Minute 98 - Councillor Salt is the wife of a fire fighter; Councillor Wood receives a firefighter's pension; Councillor Nicosia lived in the property with the demolished wall.
- b Other Disclosable Interests: Councillors Court and Hall are members of Biddulph Rotary.

97. MINUTES

- a. It was moved to sign the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 20 March 2018.
- b. It was moved to receive the Minutes of the meeting of the Town Burial Grounds Sub-Committee on Monday 10 April 2018. Councillor McGuinness is not a member of the National Trust.
- c. The Minutes of the Biddulph Grange Country Park Friends meeting on Monday 12 March 2018 were noted. Councillor Jackson remarked that the number of people involved was consistently high. Councillor Jones agreed that the support was not flagging.

98. BIDDULPH FIRE STATION AND THE MEANING OF RETAINED FIREFIGHTERS, IN RELATION TO THE CRASH ON PARK LANE - CLLR SALT

Councillor Salt felt press coverage of the recent incident on Park Lane had not done anything for the morale at Biddulph Fire Station.

Councillor Salt then read a prepared statement:

Who are retained firefighters?

They are sons, daughters, parents, husbands, wives, girlfriends, boyfriends, partners, siblings and employees. They volunteer to give up between 70 hours + a week; ON TOP of full time jobs.

For example, my husband works a 42 hour week at Longton fire station for his full time job and gives an additional 70 hours to Biddulph retained fire station. These hours are during the night and during the day. During these 70 hours, he cannot be more than 5 minutes from Biddulph Fire station. As a Dad and husband, this means that I can't either – due to child care issues. When our boys were smaller, I couldn't even pop into Sainsbury's because if he got a call, the children would be home alone. Biddulph has a full quota of retained fire fighters, (14) making a crew of at least 4 but preferably 6 24/7; making the same sacrifices as my husband and our family has done and continues to do.

However, when one of these volunteers is sick, the truck is 'off the run' unable to attend to calls in Biddulph. This is what happened during the Park Lane crash. At this time, the truck was off the due to sickness. To be clear, there needs to be a crew manager on duty all of the time. There are currently 3 qualified people at Biddulph station. Those 3 people have the responsibility and pressure to be available between them every hour, of everyday of every week of every year. That's quite some challenge! They have to be qualified to national standards and pass external examinations as well as internal assessments. I say volunteers because each firefighter gets roughly £1 for every on call hour they give. They effectively give thousands of hours a year, for very little in terms of monetary reward. So recently, when a senior member of staff was poorly, there were only two others to step in. My husband was one and he was at his full time job in Longton and watched his own colleagues respond on a specialist appliance from Longton to Biddulph and the other was also at his full time job.

Cllr Wood is right, about cuts having been made to our fire service. Stations have lost appliances and stations have gone from fully staffed 24/7 to staffed during the day time only, with retained cover in the evenings. Biddulph is in a good position, Sandyford 24/7 staffed station is relatively close by and is in a position to cover 'if' Biddulph's truck is off the run, unless they are engaged elsewhere! However, specialist appliances like the ariel ladder platform and rescue tender are few and far between – that's the job of the management; to assess risk and place resources in the best place, based on a constrained budget.

However, thanks to volunteer firefighter's and their families, trucks being off the run is a rare occurrence (Biddulph is available 90% of the time, an achievement when you consider and now realise how a retained system works). Retained firefighters is also a risk (in terms of availability) that has to be taken due to the public sector funding or lack of, which we are enduring and having to plan within.

It's worth noting that the fire service is often on the look-out for more retained firefighters to bolster their ranks. But it's also worth noting that their good will, and that of their families and employers is what makes it work. So before we criticise our fire service for not being there, remember how a retained fire service operates and how criticism makes them feel, for all that they give to our town and others up and down the UK.

Councillor Wood thought this a really important issue; press coverage could be critical. Retained firefighters were unsung heroes. He proposed that a letter is sent to the Chief Fire Officer asking that the establishment should increase to 16 not decrease to 12 with natural wastage; this was seconded by Councillor Jackson.

Councillor Nicosia did not know how long it had taken for help to arrive; there had been two ambulances, numerous police cars and 3 fire appliances at the accident. The vehicles were all in attendance for a considerable time, she wondered if they were all needed. The area had been saturated with emergency vehicles.

Councillor Wood noted that for a trapped person, a rescue tender and an appliance would be sent out.

Councillor Jones added that where multiple vehicles were involved, multiple appliances were always despatched. Some criticism was justified but not criticism of the workers; he supported that there is no reduction in cover.

Councillor Lawson had tried to get the facts. Biddulph was one of the top turn-out stations in the area; three appliances had arrived within ten minutes.

Councillor Wood asked that information should be sent to the Chief Officer, who would ask for clarification for a future meeting of the General Purposes committee. He added that an appliance could not reach Biddulph from Longton in ten minutes.

Councillor Salt noted that there was one rescue tender from Longton and the service was not recruiting extra staff, just replacing those who left.

There was a vote; Councillor Lawson was against writing to the Chief Fire Officer, all other members were in favour.

99. VERBAL REPORT ON VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT EVENT- 6 APRIL 2018

The Chief Officer gave a verbal report on the event.

16 organisations had attended with stalls/ displays and there was a very positive environment; it would be beneficial to host a follow-up event later in the year. The Chief Officer was pleased to report that the Ramblers had gained 6-8 new recruits and someone had signed up to be a Guide/ Brownie leader on the day. Organisations were very keen to work with us again.

The Chief Officer proposed that the Town Council actively promotes volunteering in Volunteers Week, 1-7 June. The Town Council would also have a specific section on the new website dedicated to volunteering.

When this event had first been considered by the Committee in November 2017, it had been agreed that the aims would be to:

- Develop capacity within the town by seeking appropriate training for volunteers. This will assist with the retention of volunteers.
- Support Town Council projects such as Civic events, footpath monitoring, Neighbourhood Planning, etc.
- Provide an opportunity for partners to seek appropriate volunteers and publicise their work.

This event had certainly gone some way towards meeting these aims.

Councillor Hall proposed to progress with the initiative; this was seconded by Councillor McGuinness and agreed.

100. VERBAL UPDATE ON STAFFORDSHIRE DAY ARRANGEMENTS- 4 MAY 2018

The Chief Officer noted that the aim was to celebrate Staffordshire, and the Town Council would have a stall at the Artisan Market to sell tourist products and to promote the 'Garden Town of Staffordshire'. The team would focus on the Miss Bateman clematis and remind people why this was the logo.

All agreed that this was appropriate.

101. UPDATE ON DEMENTIA FRIENDS CHAMPIONS TRAINING AND FUTURE ACTION

The Chief Officer reported that the Town Council Officers were now all Dementia Friends Champions and could deliver training sessions. The Chief Officer had already agreed to provide training to District Council staff and was keen to focus on those working in the Town Hall initially. One of the next steps would be to complete an audit of the building.

The Committee had previously agreed an action plan and Officers would continue to work through this. There would be a wider roll-out over the coming months.

Councillor Jones expressed an interest in training

102. UPDATE ON D&G BUS SERVICE PROVISION AND '93' SERVICE

The Chief Officer reported that there would be an 8-week gap in the service between 1 April when the 93 ceased to operate and 4 June when the new route would commence. The tender process had ended the previous week; the preferred model appeared to be a Biddulph circular.

Councillor Jones noted that the new service may not be operated by D&G; it was a shame about the gap in the service, this was most disappointing, but he was encouraged that there might be a new service in June. If this meant that there would be a service to Biddulph Moor, it would salvage something.

Councillor Lovatt cautioned that tenders went out for more than the County Council had funds for.

103. SERVICE AGREEMENT - THREE TOWN CLOCKS

The Chief Officer reported that two quotations had been received and a representative from a third company would be visiting the premises the following day. She was hopeful of being able to provide three quotes for the next meeting.

104. CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

1. CCTV review

The Chief Officer has been informed by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council that the review of CCTV provision in the town is nearing completion. When the recommendations about future management and provision have been considered, this information will be made available to Councillors.

Councillor Hart noted that if the system was five years old; the technology had changed.

2. Space returns to Staffordshire Moorlands for summer 2018- Police and Crime Commissioner update

SPACE returns to Leek, Biddulph and Cheadle this summer – with the promise of more activities, for a broader range of youngsters.

The nine district and borough councils within the county have already signed up for Space 2018, with preparations underway behind the scenes to ensure the 8-17-year-olds of Staffordshire and Stoke have a summer of fun and enjoyment to look forward to.

Full details of activities and events will be rolled-out during the build up to the summer holidays.

Use and follow #StaffsSpace2018 on Twitter for updates during the coming months.

To sign up for updates, please go to Staffordshire.space.uk or for further information you can email space@staffordshire.pcc.pnn.gov.uk

Twitter: @StaffsSpace

Facebook: [facebook.com/StaffsSpace/](https://www.facebook.com/StaffsSpace/)

Instagram: @StaffsSpace

3. Diversion of vehicular traffic- Newtown Road, Biddulph

Notice to make an Order the effect of which will be to prohibit any vehicle from proceeding in that length of Newtown Road in Biddulph from the entrance to the property called Ashmore House for a distance of approximately 130 metres in a south easterly direction unless the vehicle is being used in connection with the works; or unless the vehicle requires access to premises on the length of road or is being used for police, fire brigade or ambulance purposes. An alternative route for traffic is available via Dingle Lane, Beat Lane, Long Edge Road, Newtown Road and vice versa.

The order will come into operation from 09:30 hours on 14 May 2018 and the said works will commence on or as near as practicable to that date. It is anticipated that the works will be completed by 15:30 hours on the same day.

4. Mayor's Community Weekend

Small grants are available of up to £500 to support small events in the West Midlands as part of the Mayor's Community Weekend (30th June – 1st July). The programme opens for applications on 29th March, and closes on 16th April.

'Although this is a joint initiative with the West Midlands Combined Authority, it's worth underlining that we will be accepting applications for events and activities in Stoke-on-Trent and across Staffordshire.

It will be a very simple application process based on answering three questions, and you can apply by submitting your responses (500 words in total) or sending a short video of up to 3 minutes.'

More info below, or via these links.

<https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/about-big/mayors-community-weekend>
<https://www.wmca.org.uk/who-we-are/meet-the-mayor/mayors-community-weekend/>

5. Commonwealth Flag- flying w/c 16 April 2018

The Town Hall is flying the Commonwealth Flag to mark the fact that the UK is hosting the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), when leaders from all the member countries are gathered in London and Windsor.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm

Signed Date