

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 20 MARCH 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 Nicosia
Councillor Rogers
Councillor Rushton
Councillor Salt
Councillor Sheldon
Councillor Walley
Councillor Whilding

86.17 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence and reasons accepted were received from:

Councillor Lovatt
Councillor Swift

Councillor Flunder

87. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Dispensations: Councillor Sheldon anything pertaining to Biddulph in Bloom.
- b Other Disclosable Interests: None.

88. MINUTES

- a. It was moved to sign the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 20 February 2018.
- b. It was moved to receive the Minutes of the meeting of the Town Burial Grounds Sub-Committee on Monday 13 March 2018.

89. VERBAL UPDATE ON VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT EVENT - 6 APRIL 2018

The Chief Officer updated Councillors that this would take place on the same day as the Artisan Market; volunteers from about a dozen organisations would be in the Town Hall promoting their organisations.

The aim was to recruit volunteers and show people how they can get involved. There had been adverts in the Chronicle and information had been sent to the radio stations and Sentinel newspaper. There was also a targeted social media campaign.

Posters had been displayed in a wide range of venues and emailed to relevant organisations.

Easter crafts would be available for young people and refreshments were being provided by Blonde Folly.

Councillor Salt queried whether young people had been invited. The Chief Officer confirmed that this had been sent to schools and colleges and the advertising suggested that young people would also benefit from the event.

**90. BIDDULPH GRANGE COUNTRY PARK- CLLR JONES
Report on 'Friends' meeting on 12 March 2018**

Councillor Jones updated members that a framework document had been prepared that would aide future projects. The big news was that a £10,000 grant had been received from Moorlands Partnership for repairs to the leat.

Councillors Jones extended his thanks to the Chief Officer, Sue Fletcher and Councillor Sheldon.

Councillor Jones updated members that he was still pursuing a response in relation to the Visitor Centre, and had offered that the Town Council may consider taking it on in its current state. Information had not been passed on by the Officer who left in January. The most recent response queried whether the Town Council would be happy to complete the work and then for the building to be passed to the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. Councillor Jones had responded that the Town Council would probably not be happy with this arrangement!

Councillor Sheldon was proud to present all the Biddulph projects to the Moorlands Partnership Board; they were beautifully presented. Thanks to Sarah and her team for putting the proposals together. Councillor Hart agreed; this was very professional. He was hopeful for more money from Moorlands Partnership Board next year.

Councillor Rogers applauded Councillor Jones and others involved; he will volunteer to help out when needed.

Councillor Salt queried whether it was up to the Officers to make these decisions at the District Council. Councillor Jones confirmed that it was for a Committee to decide and he had spoken to the Portfolio Holder who was positive about the Town Council's involvement.

91. BIDDULPH TOWN COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO HOMELESSNESS

The Chief Officer had been approached by a number of organisations over the past few weeks who wanted to help rough sleepers and those at risk of homelessness. The Chief Officer had spoken to the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) to query the scale of the issue; there were pockets of extreme poverty and debt in town which could escalate for work to signpost people effectively who want to help. The Chief Officer queried whether Councillors felt there was a role for the Town Council in identifying opportunities to help and coordinating a response.

Councillor Hart felt that this was something that the Town Council should look at gave an example about young people being displaced from family homes.

Councillor Wood noted that Biddulph was not exempt and felt that things should be put in place to help before become homeless. Anything we can do would help benefit society and help people to stay in the system; there were issues around debt and help was needed for veterans.

Councillor Salt confirmed that money was available through the Royal British Legion to help homeless veterans, ex-service personnel and their families; there is a designated Welfare Officer.

Councillor Salt also noted that the Reverend Dyson had gathered resources and offered a place to stay at St Lawrence's church; thankfully there had been no take up. Hidden homelessness was an issue and affected benefit entitlement.

Councillor Jones concurred with Councillor Salt; he had spent time around the streets of Biddulph as part of his job and had not seen rough sleeping, but we should do anything possible to mitigate this.

Councillor Nicosia noted that her parents had temporarily been made homeless due to a burst pipe. There was nowhere in Biddulph with suitable temporary accommodation; this can happen suddenly.

Councillor Lawson confirmed that there was no emergency facility available.

Councillor Sheldon noted that the District Council was responsible for genuine homelessness; in her experience, this worked well.

Councillor Jackson stated that many people are only 'three pay cheques from homelessness'. People tend to gravitate towards bigger cities where can get some help and advice, rather than rural communities. There is a 'tsunami' on the horizon in the form of Universal Credit; this will have a significant impact. Sometimes the Officers in place can be a barrier and people rely on the CAB to give help and advice.

The Chief Officer queried whether she should do further investigation as to what was available and where we could signpost people.

Councillor Hall noted that the District Council has a Homeless Policy, which should be considered.

Councillor Salt proposed that this piece of work should be completed; seconded by Councillor Jones. All agreed.

92. CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

1. Great British Spring Clean

The Great British Spring Clean is running until 25 March 2018 and there is an opportunity to request additional resources or find good practice at:

<http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/>

2. Staffordshire County Council: Libraries Consultation

A reminder that the deadline for taking part in the 12-week consultation is **1 April 2018**. The online survey is at www.staffordshire.gov.uk/connectedlibraries

3. Prince's Trust

See leaflet attached. There is a new employability and self-development course for 16 to 25 year olds. The last Team completed at Burslem had 100% successful progression onto further training, education or employment.

4. Local Councillor Training Course – Tuesday 17 April 2018

A Local Councillor Training Course has been arranged for Tuesday 17 April 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 17 April 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.

Councillor Rogers suggested letting them know that this is the same night as the meeting of the full Town Council

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 8.30 pm

Signed Date