

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF BIDDULPH TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 16 JANUARY 2018

The Town Crier introduced the Deputy Mayor and Chief Officer; Pastor Liz Holdcroft led a time of prayer. The Deputy Mayor opened the meeting.

PRESENT

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

73.17 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.

No requests had been made.

74. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence and reasons accepted were received from:

The Mayor Councillor Wood
Councillor Harper
Councillor Rushton
Councillor Salt
Councillor Sheldon
Councillor Swift

Councillor Hart noted that Councillor Harper had been particularly unwell and asked if the Town Council could send a card to wish him well.

75. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Dispensations: None.
- b) Other Disclosable Interests:
Councillors Davies and Lovatt are Trustees of Staffordshire North & Stoke on Trent CAB.
Councillor Hall is a member of Biddulph Rotary.

76. MINUTES

- a) The Minutes of the meeting of the Town Council held on 12 December 2017 were approved and signed.
- b) The Minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 12 December 2017 were received.
Councillor Jones queried whether a response had been received from Staffordshire Credit Union administrators; the Chief Officer confirmed that nothing had been received as yet.
- c) The Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 8 January 2018 were received.
- d) The Minutes of the Civic Committee meeting held on 8 January 2018 were received.
- e) The Minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 9 January 2018 were approved and signed.
- f) Councillor Hall requested two amendments to the Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 9 January 2018. Item 23 should read 'Precept 2018/19' and there should be an addition to Item 30: Following a request being received by the Chief Officer, consideration would be given to this by the Chief Officer, Chair and Deputy Chair of the Finance Committee. With these amendments, the Minutes were approved and signed.
The approval of revised Financial Regulations, consideration of risk assessments and audit arrangements were noted. The precept and budget recommendations are detailed below.

77. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

Councillor McGuinness updated members that he had attended the Salvation Army Hostel in Stoke on Christmas Day, to assist in providing food to homeless people. It had been a very humbling experience and had showed Councillor McGuinness how much work goes on within the hostel. If Councillor McGuinness is elected Mayor next year, he could like to make this one of his charities.

78. PRESENTATION OF STATION ROAD DESIGNS PREPARED BY BP ARCHITECTURE

Councillor McGuinness informed members that Ms Beverley Poole was attending the meeting and proposed that Standing Orders should be suspended to allow Councillors to speak about the Station Road designs. This was moved by Councillor Hall and seconded by Councillor Jones; all were in favour.

Ms Poole distributed paper copies of the designs and displayed A1 sized copies. Ms Poole updated members that the layout had not altered significantly since the last time these had been presented. At this stage, there was more detail to enable a planning application to be made.

The paving colour would be similar to the scheme by the Health Centre, to amalgamate the two areas. There are two sets of ground-based fountains; one set may have to be omitted if costs prove to be prohibitive. The fountains have jets, lighting and a system that sucks the water back into the ground. There are also scented plants in the area.

The mining monument is the focal point and there are screens around the Sainsbury's site. Ms Poole had liaised with David Plant in Staffordshire County Council Highways and included a SWET path diagram.

Ms Poole passed around some provisional costings and noted that the drawings are ready to be submitted to the planning department at Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. Stage four of the project is tendering the work and aspects can be removed from the plans if they are too costly at this stage.

Councillor Hall queried whether areas could be paved, if the fountains were omitted. Ms Poole confirmed that this could happen.

Councillor Hart asked whether any consideration had been given to the maintenance of the fountains. Ms Poole confirmed that she had requested further information from those organisations she had already engaged with.

Councillor Rogers queried whether the costs included electricity. Ms Poole confirmed that costs included the installation of electricity, but not the supply.

Councillor Court asked whether lighting had been included in the scheme. Ms Poole noted that this was in the fountains, but not the scheme as a whole; it could be added. Councillor Court wondered whether it would be necessary to make the scheme secure.

Councillor Jones queried whether fountains could be added later. Ms Poole stated that this could happen as long as the ground work was completed at the initial stage.

Councillor Jones stated that he liked the design and had had chance to absorb the content of it. It would be a shame not to have the fountains.

Councillor Nicosia asked whether benches would be included. Ms Poole noted that the plan included moving the existing benches and then funding would need to be sought if additional benches were needed.

Councillor Hall queried whether we would need to go back to the planning department if we removed the fountains and added another feature. Ms Poole confirmed that this would be a variation of the application.

Councillor Hawley queried whether, if we reduced the number of circles, we would have to go back to the planners. Ms Poole stated that when the plans were implemented this could be a phased approach, with circles added over time.

Councillor Whilding wondered whether benches could be sponsored; Ms Poole noted that this could be a possibility.

Councillor Jackson liked the idea of the rings interlinking (as in the design); it would spoil the design if one was removed. Councillor Jackson would like to see the fountains installed. He reminded Councillors that the Town Council has reserves that could be used for this project.

Councillor Lawson noted that it would be important to understand what the running costs are.

Councillor Davies thanked Ms Poole for coming and explaining the plans, with relevant details. He noted that this design fulfilled the Council's expectations with regard to the turning area, water feature, memorial and circle layout. Councillor Davies continued to be

concerned about timescales. Negotiations were still needed with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, Staffordshire County Council and Sainsbury's; experience of the burial ground and Springfield Road development showed that these discussions may not be straightforward. It is important to get the full plan into the planning department as soon as possible. We can remove or add items, as necessary. Councillor Davies noted that we will not know the real cost until after the tenders come back.

Councillor Davies proposed that the plans are submitted to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council forthwith and discussions should continue in relation to the likely costs of the scheme. This was seconded by Councillor Jackson. There was a vote and all were in favour.

Councillor Rogers noted that labour costs may be significant.

Ms Poole confirmed that she had started discussions with organisations that may be interested in tendering for the work.

Councillor Baddeley noted that she had made enquiries about the cost of benches previously; these may be in the region of £800, which may be too expensive.

Councillor Hart noted that there was a Town Deal meeting at the end of the month. Consideration of budgets may form part of these discussions.

Councillor McGuinness thanked Ms Poole for her time.

Standing Orders were reinstated.

79. UPDATE ON GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION (GDPR)- BRIEFING NOTE ATTACHED

The Chief Officer referred to the 'Preparing for the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR): 12 steps to take now' document that had been sent out with the agenda. There would be new data protection requirements as of 25 May 2018 and Councils must start to prepare for that now. The first step was to ensure that decision-makers are aware that the law is changing.

Jean Gaunt has attended training on the GDPR. There is some uncertainty at present because the Bill is still going through Parliament. Biddulph Town Council will need to have a Data Protection Officer. At present, Jean Gaunt will take on this additional responsibility. This position cannot be taken by the Chief Officer. Over the coming months it will be necessary for the Town Council to review existing policies and practice; further updates would be provided.

80. TO RECEIVE THE CITIZENS ADVICE STAFFORDSHIRE NORTH AND STOKE-ON-TRENT ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT 2017 (ATTACHED)

The Chief Officer noted that this report was relevant to Biddulph Town Council because £25,000 is given to the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) each year. The Biddulph office is part of the wider Staffordshire North and Stoke-on-Trent CAB and it is important to understand their work locally.

This report notes that there are a significant number of people dependent on the social security system. Personal debt is a problem in North Staffordshire. The report also notes that the County Council withdrew funding for advice from 2 March 2017, but this hub of the CAB is hosting a new consumer helpline.

The Chief Officer informed Councillors that 5% of clients were from the Staffordshire Moorlands.

Councillors Davies is a Trustee of the Staffordshire North and Stoke-on-Trent CAB and felt this report was worth reading. He noted that without the £25,000 that was granted by Biddulph Town Council, the Biddulph office would shut.

Councillor Davies reminded Councillors of some of the relevant statistics: £16.2million of debt was brought to the CAB to look into; a small proportion was written off, but most was managed. Many families were helped to claim the correct benefits, and 227 families were saved from homelessness.

Councillor Jackson agreed that this was an important service. The testimonies that are included within the document bring home the issues that people are dealing with. Councillor Jackson was concerned about the impact of Universal Credit and wondered if the CAB would be 'swamped'. This Town Council believes that the work of the CAB is extremely valuable.

**81. RECOMMENDATION FROM THE HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE:
CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE REMOVAL OF AUGUST AND
DECEMBER TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS AND THE POSSIBILITY OF A 6-8 WEEK
MEETING CYCLE**

Councillor McGuinness reminded Councillors that Standing Orders were in place.

Councillor Hall moved that the Chief Officer should be asked to come back with proposals for a meeting cycle for 2018/19. Removal of some of the meetings may enable other meetings to take place in the evening, which may alleviate other concerns.

Councillor Hart is Deputy Chair of the Human Resources Committee. The idea of removing August and December meetings had been warmly received by members of the Committee. This was a good first step to reviewing the Committee structures. Councillor Hart seconded Councillors Hall's proposal.

Councillor Davies felt it would cause a slight problem if meetings were deleted altogether; there should be the option to include them, if there was sufficient business.

Councillor Jackson stated that he had no problem deleting August and December meetings; meetings could be called at short notice, if needed. Councillor Jackson felt that a 6-8 week cycle was a problem. There should be ten meetings each year.

Councillor Lovatt seconded this proposal; August and December meetings should be deleted. It would be harmful to the Town Council if there was a 6-8 week cycle as people would be confused about the dates of meetings. Everyone understands that Town Council meetings are on the third Tuesday of the month.

Councillor Jones did not want anything other than monthly meetings.

Councillor Lawson was concerned that there was a lot of business to do and six meetings a year may not be sufficient.

Councillor Hawley was in favour of removing August and December meetings. He was concerned about the impact of fewer meetings on the Planning Committee; Committee meetings would still need to take place.

Councillor Jackson thought that a decision should be taken tonight about August and December meetings; all Councillors seemed to be in favour of removing them.

Councillor Jones noted that the meeting was only just quorate; we should wait for other Councillors to be involved.

Councillor Jackson felt that this was not relevant; the meeting was quorate and a decision could be made.

Councillor Hall wanted to see the consequences of removing meetings and felt that the Town Council should consider the schedule of meetings first.

Councillor Rogers didn't want to lose the December social gathering. He felt the Council should be a 'tight ship'.

There was a vote on Councillor Hall's proposal; seven in favour, three against, four abstentions. Councillor Jackson withdrew his proposal.

82. ACCOUNTS & FINANCE

a) The following accounts were received for payment:

Expenditure in excess of £500

Grant Thornton	960.00
Charges for 2016/17 audit	
Ebm printers	2832.80
Notecards, calendars, Stalls sign at switch on	
9000 Neighbourhood Plan questionnaires	
Overprinting on envelopes	

Expenditure below £500

Protech Electrical	462.00
Repairs to Biddulph Moor phone box light (105)	
Replace faulty timer	
Replace damaged string on tree	
20 x Coloured lamps	
Royal Mail Group Ltd	353.46
Pre-paid Postage for Neighbourhood Plan questionnaires	
SMDC – lease of land at Congleton Road for allotments	90.00
S Haydon – travel to SLCC event in Uttoxeter	23.49
J Gaunt - Parking at Uttoxeter for SLCC event	5.00
Brian Carter un/lock gate at Woodhouse Burial Ground	40.00

Credit card payments

Shutterstock monthly payment	19.00
Facebook - post boost	6.88
Amazon - 1 personal alarm	7.49

Amazon - 2 personal alarms 12.98

b) Supplementary accounts

Expenditure in excess of £500

SMDC – re-issue cheque 6261 for room hire 22081.71
Previous cheque cancelled.

Salaries 4614.16
HMR&C direct debit to be paid 1 February 1646.52
Staffs Pension Fund 1750.87

Expenditure below £500

Tidysite – waste skip at Woodhouse Burial Ground 19.80
Robert Shaw – soil skip at Town Burial Ground 156.00

R G Standell – Lengthsman work to December 2018 240.00
Petty cash 17.43

c) Finance Committee Recommendation (9 January 2018)

Councillor Hall moved that the Accounts to 31 December 2017 should be approved and the Precept request of £295,375.57 (two hundred and ninety five thousand, three hundred and seventy five pounds and fifty seven pence only) should be approved. This was seconded by Councillor Hart. There was a vote and all were in favour.

The meeting closed at 8.12 pm

Signed Date