

MINUTES OF THE CIVIC COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 10 MARCH 2015

PRESENT

The Mayor – Councillor Swift
Deputy Mayor – Councillor Adams
Councillor Baddeley
Councillor Davies: Chair
Councillor Deane
Councillor Ellsum
Councillor Gibson
Councillor Hall
Councillor Hart
Councillor Jones
Councillor Rogers: Vice Chair
Councillor Sheldon MBE
Councillor Whilding
Councillor Wood

53.14 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:
Councillor Deaville
Councillor Harper
Councillor Jackson
Councillor Lovatt
Mr J Robinson – Town Crier
V Brown – Market Organiser

54. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Dispensations: none were declared
- b Other Interests: none were declared. Minute 56: Councillor Sheldon as Chair and Councillors Davies and Hart as members of the Moorlands Partnership Board.

55. MINUTES

- a It was **RESOLVED** to sign the Minutes of the meeting of the Civic Committee held on 10 February 2015.
- b It was **RESOLVED** to receive a verbal report of the Tourism Committee meeting held on 10 February 2015:
Councillor Rogers spoke of a questionnaire to go out to all members, seeking information to be included in a new Biddulph Guide. The Guide would be at no cost to the Town Council – paid for from advertising. Guides would be distributed free of charge, we would have editorial control. Councillor Sheldon felt that a critical factor would be advertising costs to businesses. Please return the form to the office within two weeks. Guide to be reproduced every two years. There was a request for electronic copy to be sent to all members. Councillor Hart commented that two leaflets were now out from Visit Peak with Biddulph Grange as a featured destination. He could ask one of the tourism officers to meet with Tourism Committee at a future date. The Chair suggested inviting an officer to a future meeting.

56. MOORLANDS PARTNERSHIP BOARD FUNDING

Updates were given on the following projects:

- a Kissing Gates project
The Chair had spoken about the kissing gates project at the last meeting. He briefly outlined costings, which had now been obtained and an application for a Moorlands Partnership Grant had been submitted.

Councillor Gibson said that years ago the Town Council used to set aside funding for Moorland Partnership projects, but that this hadn't been earmarked for this year. He would disagree with regeneration funding being used outside the town centre. Councillor Wood agreed, saying that the process was the wrong way round – that the grant had been applied for before the Town Council had agreed to match fund. He felt that there had been some secrecy about this project. Councillor Hart explained that the Moorlands Partnership Board did receive bids where all the finance was not yet in place. These gates were part of our industrial/agricultural heritage and they would disappear if the work was not done soon. There had also been a precedent set when regeneration money was used for a lending trust some years ago.

Councillor Hall said that this was not a secret deal and that the Finance Committee had not been brought into this yet. The Chair doesn't have the final decision to use the regeneration budget; there would be a discussion between all members.

Councillor Wood added that he was not against the projects, just that he felt that the process had not yet gone to the Finance Committee or Civic Committee. He felt that it didn't flow right and that we should not have ad hoc projects coming forwards. Councillor Hall pointed out that we were not voting for the finance, just to put the project forwards. Councillor Wood asked, for clarification, if the situation was as follows; the project is put to Moorlands Partnership Board (MPB) for funding in principle and then, if approved, comes to the Finance Committee. The Chair agreed that this was so and Councillor Wood said that he was happier with this situation. The Chair added that he had not had the idea of railroading this through; he just wanted to put it to the committee in principal for agreement, prior to the Partnership Board meeting on 17th March.

Councillor Sheldon said that projects flow both ways. We didn't have a special pot for our historic artefacts and risked losing them. If we were not careful we could lose what Biddulph had, in the past, fought for. The Moorlands Partnership Board would provide us with half the costs and we could always organise public fundraising for the rest.

Councillor Gibson said that it would be better if Council decided how much to put into Moorlands Partnership Board from Regeneration Fund or we would risk opening the floodgates. He felt it needed to be capped. The Chair said that this was possibly so, but that this was not the place to do it.

Councillor Jones expressed his concerns, saying that he had not expected this funding to come from the Regeneration budget. He said that councillors had projects in Biddulph Moor which could benefit from this fund, eg refurbishment of the Trent Head Well.

The Chair explained that the conditions of applying for MPB funds had recently changed – Cheadle and Leek had been able to apply for years as they had conservation areas – now we could too, from the Environmental Enhancement grants. The meeting on 17th was the last of this Administration and he wanted to access the pot quickly. Councillor Sheldon reminded members that she had brought this to previous meetings and had also brought the criteria along. For years Biddulph had

been contributing to the fund without receiving any back. Now that the remit had widened we could make a list of projects in all areas.

Councillor Jones felt concerned that he had not been consulted and that other things needed doing. The Chair said there was no limit on work we could put forwards – other areas in the District had received a lot of money for various projects. Councillor Sheldon agreed, saying that it was now up to everyone to come forwards with projects. She said that the Trent Head Well was in need of restoration – all of the Wells should be saved. Grants would still be available and she had been upset how little Biddulph had taken from this. Councillor Hall said that all pots had been in the Finance budget – there were no ‘secret pots’.

The Chair clarified that, if successful with the grant application, it would come back to Council for a decision whether to proceed and where to take the funding from. Councillor Jones added that this was a worthy project and that he would support it, but that he was not happy with how this had gone forwards. Councillor Hart said that as we were at the end of this financial year we would miss out if it didn’t go forwards. We could not attract Heritage Lottery funding and the Environmental Fund gives Biddulph projects a chance.

Councillor Wood asked Councillor Hart for a copy of a report and reiterated that he was not against projects, but wanted the process following properly. He understood that criteria had changed, but we should have had more time to put projects forward. Surely the funding would be available next year? Councillor Gibson said we had not decided to put money forwards from any budget yet. If offered a grant Council would then decide.

Councillor Sheldon explained that these projects took an enormous amount of work to put together – specialists had to be sourced, a brief written and costings obtained. It was now necessary to decide where this funding fitted within the Council’s budgets. Councillor Jones felt that if the costings had been done, we should move forwards, and then think about where the money comes from. After the election decide on projects and prioritise them.

Councillor Wood proposed that the Council applies to Moorlands Partnership Board for the Kissing Gates project and then, if successful, decides where to match fund from. This was seconded by Councillor Swift. A vote was taken and all were in favour.

Councillor Sheldon commented that we may need to set up a fund for our historical artefacts and that she was aggrieved that we had missed out on funding for so long. There was an enormous amount of work to be done.

b Uplighters for the town hall trees

A cost for this work was being sought, but because of potential work being carried out to the frontage we had been advised to wait by the District Council. The wiring could then be incorporated, thus saving money.

c Town centre pole mounted banners

Staffordshire County Council Highways were not encouraging about additional items being placed in the footway in the town centre. Councillor Wood felt that it was most unfair of the County Council to dictate what Biddulph Town centre could have. Members discussed this and felt that it may be better to site the poles on the A527 rather than in the town centre as more people would see them. Councillor Hart said that approximately 800 cars per hour drove along Meadows Way. It was moved to proceed with costings for poles and banners.

d Re-design of War Memorial area

An architect had been asked to look at the area and a briefing would take place in the near future. It was felt to be a cluttered area, in need of making worthy of the War Memorial.

e Other projects for consideration

Councillor Jones had put forwards the Trent Head Well and said that he and Councillor Hawley would discuss projects with the Biddulph Moor Community Association. Other residents' associations should be asked for projects by ward councillors.

57. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

There had been a lot of work in the town centre, with Eon digging up the paving – please inform the office of the reinstatement is not carried out properly.

Councillor Rogers said that the workmen have taken the cast iron posts away and he was concerned that they are returned. Councillor Sheldon added that they will need restoring when they are returned, as taking them out damages them.

The meeting closed at 8.05pm

Signed Date