

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 21 APRIL 2015

PRESENT

The Mayor - Councillor Swift
The Deputy Mayor - Councillor Adams
Councillor Baddeley
Councillor Davies
Councillor Deane
Councillor Ellsum
Councillor Hall
Councillor Harper
Councillor Hawley
Councillor Hart - Chair
Councillor Jackson
Councillor Jones
Councillor Lovatt
Councillor Rogers
Councillor Sheldon MBE
Councillor Whilding
Councillor Wood

Also in attendance
Councillor Walley

113.14 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence and reasons accepted were received from:
Councillor Deaville

114. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Dispensations: Councillor Wood in 103.14(a) - Staffordshire FARS - as a retired member.
- b Other Disclosable Interests: Councillor Sheldon in anything relating to Biddulph in Bloom, as Chairman.

115. MINUTES

- a It was **Resolved** to sign the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 17 March 2015 and the Special meeting held on 8 April 2015. Councillor Hall had sent apologies to the special meeting.

Reference Minute 112: Councillor Wood said that with only 15 stations and 15 appliances, there would be no retained firefighters in Staffordshire. He urged individual Councillors to write to object to losing the station at Biddulph and the retained firefighters to be so diminished. He thought that individual complaints would add to the Town Council response.

Councillor Davies noted that he had asked FO Luznyj a question on response times - this response would be pursued. Councillor Davies pointed out that even FO Luznyj had not been in favour of the proposal.

- b It was **Resolved** to receive the Minutes of the Allotments Committee meetings held on 1 and 15 April 2015.

Councillor Jackson said that the project was now moving along at pace, we would soon be receiving costings and decisions would need to be made. He thanked the time put in and efforts of allotment holder Mr S Clayton, adding that we would not be where we were without him.

Councillor Sheldon added that the selected plan was on display in the Chamber that evening for any interested councillor to view.

- c It was **Resolved** to receive the Minutes of the meeting of the Burial Grounds Sub-committee held on 13 April 2015.

1.16. NHS CONSULTATION – NEW MODEL OF CARE

Marcus Warnes, Chief Operating Officer of NHS North Staffordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), was to attend the meeting to be held on 19 May 2015.

1.17. CROSSING, BIDDULPH HIGH STREET

Councillor Rogers reported that County Councillor Mark Deaville had met with the highways officer and County Councillor Lawson at the High Street crossing and that he had been invited to join them. County Councillor Deaville had been alarmed at the terrible condition of the crossing and thought it should be redesigned from scratch. County Councillor Deaville would like to meet with Town Council representatives on site to work out what to do that would be both sustainable and satisfactory.

Councillor Jackson wondered why County Councillor Deaville wished to meet with the Town Council again. He reported that Leek town centre had raised humps which had been cemented in, Councillor Jackson thought it should be up to the County Council to put the crossing right. Councillor Jackson would like to attend the proposed meeting.

Councillor Jones concurred with Councillor Jackson and was encouraged that County Councillor Deaville had been so positive. Councillor Jones thought that this Council should dig in and insist that the specification was followed and the job done properly, adding that the County Council knew the views of the Town Council.

1.18. ERNEST & MRS MARY WELLS AMBULANCE FUND

A decision was needed on how to utilise this fund (£2,129.12), following the redemption of the War Stock.

Councillor Jones proposed that applications should be invited and this was seconded by Councillor Jackson. Councillor Harper felt that this money should be dispensed by the Grants Committee with a specific remit. Councillor Jones accepted this and all were in favour.

Councillor Jones noted that the original purpose had been a philanthropic benevolent gesture by the Wells Family. Councillor Jackson added that a different criteria than the usual for Town Council grants should be used and Councillor Jones agreed.

Councillor Hawley suggested advertising that the grant was available, and the use of separate applications, under the administration of the Finance Committee. This was agreed.

Councillor Hart left the meeting for the discussion of the following item, with Vice Chair, Councillor Jones, taking the Chair.

119. HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY – BIDDULPH MOOR

Councillor Jones reported that the survey had not been initiated by Local Development Framework (LDF) but by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC) Officers who had been inundated by developers who wanted to turn green fields on Biddulph Moor into housing estates. The survey had only received a 26% response, with most being against the proposal.

Councillor Hall said that this reminded him about the report about the tip. People hadn't bothered to respond. Councillor Hall continued to say that the report was blind to reality and had been based on a flimsy statistics base and he was not happy.

Councillor Wood felt that the problem was that SMDC did not have a 5 year housing plan and this problem related to every ward in this town. He added that the planning system did not work at SMDC, noting that brownfields sites could be identified instead.

Councillor Davies had spoken to SMDC Planning Officers and to Michelle Costello. The survey had been triggered as a result of developers making enquiries. The reason that SMDC carried out the survey was to ensure impartiality. The cost of the survey was split between the developer and SMDC. He added that the Officer should have told the Town Council that the initiative had come from a developer when addressing the Council last year.

The Report showed that the need was pretty negligible and Councillor Jackson was not surprised. He added that Councillors were often the last to know, this was because of the LDF not being ready. It gave a way in for developers and was like a 'red flag to a bull'.

Councillor Hawley did not think that the survey was very representative. However, people had made some recommendations. He added that the Town Council Planning Committee had instigated that we start a local plan of our own in Biddulph to get ahead of SMDC. This would be for the next administration and he hoped to get something down in next 12 months.

120. COMMUNICATIONS/CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

- a May 8th of this year sees the 70th anniversary of the end of the war in Europe, known as VE Day. To help Biddulph mark the occasion, Biddulph Twinning Association is holding a VE Day Dance on Friday 8th May 2015 at Biddulph Town Hall, doors open at 7-30pm. Tickets are 12.50 pp and are available from John Robinson.
- b Staffordshire Tithe Map Digitisation Project – letter received to say that the Friends of the Staffs Archive Service were fundraising to enable the digitising of all of the tithe maps and that no targeted donation had yet been received to cover Biddulph's map. The amount of sponsorship required was £100. Outgoing Chair Councillor Rogers asked that this item be added to the Agenda for the next meeting of the Tourism Committee.

121. MEETINGS ATTENDED DURING THE MONTH

No reports were made.

122. LENGSTHMAN WORK

The Chief Officer reported that the Lengthsman budget had been spent at the year-end by swapping around some of the projects.

123. CHIEF OFFICER’S REPORT

1 The Trent Challenge

A 3 day walk from the Head of the Trent to Shugborough Hall will take place from 9th May. This will be followed by a 9 day swim from Shugborough along the whole of the River Trent to the Humber Estuary. The purpose of this is to raise awareness of the neglected state of the river through Stoke on Trent. Biddulph Moor Community Association is to tidy the Well and to join the walk from Biddulph Moor and Biddulph Ramblers are also to join the walkers.

Councillor Jones noted that the Chronicle had reported on this and had inferred that Biddulph Moor was a mess.

2 SPCA Gazette – Spring 2015

The latest edition of the SPCA Newsletter has been received.

3 Timetable for Annual Audit for year ended 31 March 2015

The end of year accounts has been examined by the Monitoring Councillor and will be sent to the Internal Auditor, Elizabeth Thompson, on 28 April. On return, the audited accounts and supporting documents will be presented to the Town Council for approval and signing at the meeting of 19 May and sent to the Auditors by 15 June.

4 Lighting Columns – High Street

Information received today that the columns are to be painted next week; black gloss with gold detail. I have been asked how the Town Council would like the clematis detail painting. (They are currently black gloss.)

It was proposed by Councillor Lovatt and seconded by Councillor Harper to highlight the clematis detail in gold. All were in favour. The painters are to be asked to seal the cracks around the collars, and to remove any notices and/or stickers prior to painting.

The Chair thanked all members adding that they could have been a lot worse. He looked forward to seeing as many as possible next time round. It had been a privilege to chair the General Purposes Committee for last two years and to serve as deputy chair before that for a long time. Councillor Hart wished Good luck to all.

The Vice Chair thanked all members and wished the Chair luck, too.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm

SignedDate.....