

MINUTES OF THE CIVIC COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 7 JANUARY 2019

PRESENT

The Deputy Mayor - Councillor Davies
Councillor Hall
Councillor Hart
Councillor Jackson
Councillor Jones
Councillor Lawson
Councillor Nicosia
Councillor Rogers
Councillor Salt
Councillor Sheldon
Councillor Swift
Councillor Whilding

also in attendance

Councillor Hawley

47. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from

The Mayor - Councillor McGuinness
Councillor Baddeley
Councillor Court

48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

49. MINUTES

- a) The Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 13 November 2018 were signed as an accurate record.
- b) The Minutes of the Tourism Sub-Committee meeting held on Tuesday 13 November 2018 were received.
- c) The Minutes of the Christmas Lights Working Group meeting held on Wednesday 21 November 2018 were received.
Councillor Davies reported that the event went extremely well and thanked all those involved; Jodie and Sarah, Councillor Rogers for his technical assistance and Councillor Jones. It had been a very good evening. Councillor Rogers thanked the Chairman for providing the food. Councillor Jones noted that the Biddulph Moor event went very well too, he thanked Rob and Ray they had been fabulous, first class.

50. STATION ROAD UPDATE

The draft licence from Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC) for Biddulph Town Council to use the land at Station Road had been circulated; Councillor Davies

thought it very straightforward. The Chief Officer reminded members that this was a public meeting and the item under discussion was confidential and directed members to Page 2 part 2, there would be an annual licence fee; 3a and 3b note that the Town Council can only use this land as a garden and amenity and that this Council would be responsible for maintenance. This would need to be included within the Committee's budget. This would come before the Town Council for formal approval

Councillor Salt queried 3e; would this prevent a monument or the fountains from being erected. Councillor Davies noted that these structures had already been permitted under the planning permission approval.

It was proposed by Councillor Hart and seconded by Councillor Jones to accept the licence, this was agreed.

Councillor Salt asked if there had been any progress about the road spur, Councillor Davies noted that there were ongoing discussions behind the scenes. Councillor Salt asked if the funds were in our possession, the Chief Officer responded that they were not at present; she would follow this up. Councillor Salt asked whether information was available on timescales. Councillor Davies responded that the architect was going through the tender documents picking out the items which would be retained keeping within our budget, the contractor would then be contacted to confirm current costs.

51. TO CONSIDER THE REGISTRATION OF 'THE ROYAL OAK' AS A COMMUNITY ASSET

Councillor Davies noted that the Town Council could undergo a process of registering Community Assets; this would give the Town Council an opportunity to retain the building, by buying it, should it be sold. Councillor Davies wondered whether this should be an option for the Royal Oak.

There was discussion about whether the Town Council would want to purchase this building going forward, and concerns were raised about registering this building and not others. Councillor Swift had completed research into the extensive history of the Royal Oak building and site.

The Chief Officer explained that this registration could be carried out at any point on any building. It meant that this Council would be contacted if the building was being sold for a different use. This Council would have the first opportunity to buy the building, which could be turned into the Biddulph version of the 'Foxlowe Centre', for example. It was a process that could be undertaken as part of the Neighbourhood Plan development to safeguard important buildings in the town.

It was agreed not to pursue this at this time.

52. TO CONSIDER REQUESTING PERMISSION FROM THE DISTRICT COUNCIL TO DEVELOP THE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICE SPACE WITHIN THE TOWN HALL

The Chief Officer noted that over 12 months ago, the Police had vacated what had previously been the Town Council committee room, but more recently used as a shower and locker room. This Council had given up a room to enable the extension work to be carried out; on the understanding that the committee room would be

returned at the end of the work, in the same condition it had been previously. Some work still needed to be done e.g. removal of the shower, removal of boards over the windows. Discussions between the Police and landlord – SMDC, were not moving forward. This Council had money in the budget, the Chief Officer suggested that permission is sought to carry out the work and enable staff to move into a better environment, with more storage.

Councillor Salt asked why this had taken so long, why District Councillors were not putting pressure on the Officers to get the work done.

Councillor Davies noted that the District Council was putting pressure on the Police, but negotiations were not progressing. Did this Council want to get on with the work so that the room could be used?

Councillor Salt was concerned that we had a small budget which did not include the refurbishment of the room; she understood that staff were struggling and wondered if the Chief Constable had been approached to intervene.

Councillor Hart reaffirmed that this was between the District Council and Staffordshire Police, it may spur them on if we request permission to refurbish the room; the District Council would then claim the money from the Police

Councillor Rogers was disappointed, adding that it would cost thousands and thousands to put the room right.

Councillor Davies noted that quotes would be sought along with permission from the District Council.

Councillor Jones added that this needed to be done, he proposed that a letter is sent to the District Council asking that a letter is sent to the Police. This should state that if the work was not completed by the end of February 2019, the Town Council would do the work and send the bill to the Police.

Councillor Nicosia noted that we always had to push for anything to do with Biddulph, we should push to a deadline.

Councillor Wood concurred with Councillor Jones adding that we should threaten with legal action, it was at stalemate.

Councillor Jackson suggested that as we would pay rent when we moved in, we should do the work, move in and not pay rent until the money had been paid off.

Councillor Swift said it was not good to threaten the District Council.

Councillor Sheldon asked what would be done with the additional space, the Chief Officer explained that staff would be in one room, storage and the photocopier in another and there would be a room to hold small meetings, the Council Chamber would become a more rentable space.

Councillor Salt thought we would be back to square one if we took over the running of the Town Hall, and unable to re-coup money spent.

Councillor Davies suggested getting a quote for the work needed.

Councillor Jones proposed writing to the District Council portfolio holder, asking Officers to write to the Police, saying that if the room was not restored by the end of March 2019, it would arrange for the work to be carried out and send the bill to the Police. If the work was still not done it would follow legal channels.

This was seconded by Councillor Whilding and agreed. Councillor Sheldon abstained from the vote. Councillor Jackson asked that the letter be sent forthwith.

Councillor Salt would like the Town Council to be privy to the letter sent to the Police.

Councillor Jackson asked of the District Council was receiving rent for the room now, if not it was losing money as it had a tenant wanting to rent.

53. TO CONSIDER THE PROVISION OF FIRST AID TRAINING FOR STAFF AND OTHER USERS OF THE TOWN HALL

The Chief Officer noted that the course could be held at the Town Hall; Town Council staff and partners could attend.

This was proposed by Councillor Hart and seconded by Councillor Wood and agreed. Councillor Sheldon expressed a willingness to attend.

54. UPDATE ON EVENT SIGNAGE COSTS AND LOGISTICS

The Chief Officer noted that there would be an annual review of the market at the next meeting. Initial feedback on the new highways signage had been good, it had been identified that a few more specific signs would be needed for the Artisan Market at a cost of £275.

Councillor Hawley noted that the Biddulph Moor map needed amendments; he would provide a map to the Chief Officer.

The Chief Officer noted that this Council could be more flexible now that signage was in-house.

55. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Councillor Davies noted that there was money available for Future High Street Fund; the bid had to be made at District Council level. Interest must be expressed by 22 March 2019.

The Chief Officer noted that this project had just been launched, but there was a lot of money available to regenerate High Streets. This could fund physical infrastructure, acquisition of land, projects and adaptations to the High Street.

The Neighbourhood Plan and emerging Neighbourhood Development Order meant that the Town Council had an excellent evidence base to demonstrate the need for these improvements; this is the type of funding that will help to complete public realm work and larger projects within the town.

Councillor Jackson felt that we had been here before and advised caution.

Councillor Hart suggested contacting the District Council.

Councillor Nicosia thought that it sounded good, but we could never get anything done with the Highways as it was all down to the County Council; would we still be restricted? Councillor Jackson responded that if the work was legal and this Council paid for it, then the County Council would have no objections.

Councillor Wood noted that this could be a tortuous process and proposed that this Council employ a specialist to put in the bids; this was something which the District Council should look at. The Chief Officer noted that we already had a consultant with the Neighbourhood Plan that could assist with this.

Councillor Hawley suggested that a start is made in identifying projects that we want to complete.

Councillor Davies noted that priorities had already been identified by the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group.

The Chief Officer noted that the Masterplan for the town centre had already been compiled; the NDO draft was already a good base.

Councillor Jackson was concerned about the timing; he suggested convening a Town Deal meeting with Dai Lerner where the District Council could be asked to complete the bid. Investigation should be made into the work currently in progress, was it for all the three towns, the rural communities, or just Leek-based?

It was agreed that the Chief Officer would make investigations and report back at the next Civic Committee meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm

Signed Date