

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF BIDDULPH TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 11 JUNE 2019

The Town Crier introduced the Town Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Chief Officer and led attendees in a time of prayer.

PRESENT

The Mayor Councillor Davies
The Deputy Mayor – Councillor Jones
Councillor Baddeley
Councillor Barlow
Councillor Brady
Councillor Garvey
Councillor Hall
Councillor Hart
Councillor Hawley
Councillor Jackson
Councillor McLoughlin
Councillor Perkin
Councillor Rogers
Councillor Rushton
Councillor Salt
Councillor Sheldon
Councillor Smith
Councillor Yates

1.19 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.

Standing items for discussion as necessary- Policing in Biddulph.

PCSO Powell was in attendance as Sergeant Baddeley was on annual leave. PCSO Powell noted that there had been a 'spike' in crime for one month, but the overall picture was one of reduction. The SPACE scheme was planned for the holiday period.

There were no questions.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence and reasons accepted were received from:

Councillor Adams
Councillor Harper
Councillor Redfern
Councillor Swift

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a) To declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests & Dispensations: Councillor Sheldon in anything pertaining to Biddulph in Bloom. Councillors Davies and Jones received Mayoral and Deputy Mayoral allowances in Item 12.
- b) To declare any Other Disclosable Interests: None

4. MINUTES

- a) It was moved to approve and sign the Minutes of the meeting the Town Council held on 16 April 2019.
- b) It was moved to approve and sign the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 16 April 2019.
- c) It was moved to approve and sign the Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 16 April 2019.
- d) It was moved to approve and sign the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Town Council held on 14 May 2019.
- e) It was moved to approve and sign the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 21 May 2019.

Councillor Jackson asked for an update on re-surfacing of the Wharf Road car park. Councillor Hart had met the contract officer on-site. The Chief Officer noted that she had been asked to count the cars parked in disabled spaces to establish whether parent and child parking could be facilitated; this had been requested by Councillor Salt. Councillor Davies noted that any feedback on usage would be beneficial for the Chief Officer, and could be fed back to the District Council Assets Team.

- f) It was moved to receive the Minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held on 21 May 2019.
- g) It was moved to receive the Minutes of the Town and Community Committee meeting held on 21 May 2019.

Councillor Jackson had been in attendance at this meeting.

5. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor had no updates to provide.

6. RECOMMENDATION FROM THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING:

A letter had been received from a concerned resident in relation to the poor state of roads and footpaths in the town.

Councillor Salt made a proposal that the Town Council writes to the County Council to request that a site visit is undertaken; all Councillors will have the opportunity to contribute to discussions at this site visit.

Councillor Salt moved the motion; seconded by Councillor Jones and agreed.

7. 2018-19 ANNUAL RETURN (PROFORMA ATTACHED, FOR INFORMATION)

a) To complete Section 1 of the Annual Return- the Annual Governance Statement (assertions to be read aloud)

The Chief Officer had tabled the audit queries that were received from the Internal Auditor; Councillor Salt queried whether these had been resolved. The Chief Officer confirmed that they had been.

The Mayor read each statement allowed; Councillors agreed that reasonable measures were in place to ensure that the Town Council's actions were appropriate and transparent. The Mayor signed Section 1 of the Annual Return.

b) To approve and sign Section 2 of the Annual Return

The Chief Officer reminded members that these figures had been received at the previous Finance Committee, and had been sent to the Internal Auditor for validation.

Moved by Councillor Jones; seconded by Councillor Hart and approved. Section 2 was signed.

c) To note that an internal control meeting was held on 9 May 2019, resulting in the attached actions.

This was noted.

8. VERBAL UPDATE ON THE MANAGEMENT OF BIDDULPH TOWN HALL

The Chief Officer noted that this was a standing agenda item. It was agreed that this item should be 'Biddulph Town Hall and Visitor Centre' going forward. There were no updates.

9. APPROVAL OF PAYMENTS FOR STATION ROAD WORK (INVOICES ATTACHED)

- Western Power, installation/ excavation- £2991.83 +VAT
- Fontana, Fountain materials- EURO 9,362
- BP Architecture approved payment to contractor- £15,051.76

The Chief Officer noted that these payments were necessary in order for the project to start on-site.

Councillor McLoughlin had some concerns about sending money to Greece/ Cyprus for the fountains. The Chief Officer confirmed that she believed BP Architecture had undertaken a process of due diligence; this was why the Town Council had agreed to work with BP Architecture as the project managers.

Councillor Davies noted that the contractors needed equipment in order to start on-site. Councillor Jones felt that the recommendation had the endorsement of the architect.

Councillor Yates queried if the VAT was repayable; the Chief Officer confirmed that the Town Council could claim VAT back.

Councillor Jones moved the three items 'on block'; seconded by Councillor Rushton and agreed.

10. ITEM REQUESTED BY COUNCILLOR YATES- MANAGEMENT OF EMPTY PROPERTIES IN BIDDULPH

Councillor Yates presented this item, with a tabled note.

Councillor Yates had developed this idea over the past few weeks; SMDC Officers hadn't been forthcoming with information about empty properties in the town. He had been informed that this information could not be shared as a result of GDPR restrictions. Councillor Yates had raised this with the Chief Executive, Simon Baker; this was not a satisfactory reply.

Councillor Yates noted that there had been 1089 empty properties across the Moorlands; this had been updated in July 2017. There were too many derelict properties.

Councillor Yates felt there was a duty to convert redundant houses to homes; this would protect the greenbelt. The Local Plan had no credibility whilst there were derelict properties.

Councillor Yates felt that clarification was needed as to whether there is a plan, with an allocated resource. Pressure should be exerted on SMDC; they are letting Biddulph down. This is a new Council, with a new term, which could resolve this issue.

Councillor Hart felt that the legislation in place did not help the District Council; there was no clear funding from central government. Some empty properties were empty as a result of family disputes and court action.

Councillor Hawley felt that pressure should be put on the District Council to get this information up-to-date. It would be beneficial to see the details of properties that are empty and why; the Town Council can then exert some pressure. The District Council should implement the existing strategy.

Councillor Rogers noted that this was not a 'derelict town'; mills were mainly well used, but we can give the District Council a 'nudge'.

Councillor Jones agreed with Councillor Hawley; the Town Council should request that this information is up-to-date. The Town Council has no 'legislative clout' and it is not that big a problem.

Councillor Jackson noted that there were 303 properties that had been empty for 3 years or more in the Moorlands. The Town Council did not know for sure whether there was nothing that could be done; this should be explored. It is 'criminal' that there are empty properties that should be brought into use.

Councillor Yates reiterated his proposal, 'that we pass a motion to exert the maximum pressure on SMDC- they are letting Biddulph down on this major regeneration issue. This requires effort, clever thought and hard work'. Councillor Yates was hopeful he would get a list of empty properties. Without this list, we can not check the situation; we need to use local knowledge.

Councillor Davies noted that the District Council, as a Planning Authority, have no jurisdiction on where plans are developed; they don't have the authority to push this forward.

Councillor McLoughlin was cautious about where the figures had come from; he didn't believe the figure was as high as this.

Councillor Hart left the room. Councillor McLoughlin noted that Stringer Street and the mills on Walley Street were still in use.

Councillor Davies felt there should be a process of due diligence of the list of empty properties.

Councillor Sheldon noted that there were birds in the Station Road mill; residents are concerned about this.

Councillor Yates took on board the need to clarify the list.

The motion that pressure is exerted on SMDC to provide a list of empty properties and the reasons why properties are empty, with information about the powers that can be used was seconded by Councillor Jackson.

Councillor Salt noted that Building Control and Environmental Health have a role to play.

The motion was agreed unanimously. Councillor Hart returned to the Chamber.

11. NEW LOCAL COUNCILLOR TRAINING COURSES

WEDNESDAY 3 JULY 2019

WEDNESDAY 10 JULY 2019

Time: 7 pm – 9 pm

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 Principle

The Chief Officer asked Councillors to let her know whether they wanted to attend these sessions; the Town Council would pay for these.

The dates were noted.

12. ACCOUNTS AND FINANCE

a) Accounts received for payment in June 2019

Expenditure over £500

D&G Bus Ltd. Provision of 93 bus service for May 2019	£3229.80
D&G Bus Ltd. Provision of 93 bus service for April 2019	£3076.00
Urban Vision- Neighbourhood Development Order preparation	£6,000.00
Urban Vision- Neighbourhood Plan preparation	£1,200.00
Ironage Designs (Deposit to repair and replace Burial Ground gates)	£762.12

Expenditure under £500

Countrywide Grounds Maintenance (Springfield Road)- June 2019	£58.50
Rialtas- Omega Cashbook only Annual Support up to 5 users networked	£454.80
SPCA- Councillor training	£55
Viking- stationery	£399.13
Business Products- photocopier services	£280.33
Chronicle Series (Biddulph Network/ Notice of Annual Town Meeting)	£276.48
Ash Waste Services (Town Burial Ground)	£284.14
Tidysite (Woodhouse Burial Ground)	£23.10
LCR (NALC magazine)	£17
KCS (final photocopier payment)	£194.80
Market imprest: For stall construction and dismantling	£180.00
Brian Carter: Un/lock gates at Woodhouse Burial Ground	£40.00

b) Supplementary accounts

Expenditure above £500

Salaries	£5,171.75
HMRC to be paid 31 May 2019	£1,857.03
Staffs Pension Fund	£2,121.97
J Davies - Mayor's Allowance	£2,535.00
J Jones - Deputy Mayor's Allowance	£1,020.00
J Robinson - Town Crier's Honorarium	£610.00
Down To Earth Designs Ltd Work at Community Garden Station Road Prelims and first instalment for purchase of materials	£15,051.76
R Standell Lengthsman work	£1,328.00

Expenditure below £500

B Harrison Reimburse for hire of skip Park Lane allotments	£160.00
Waterplus Water at Town Burial Ground March to May 2019 Water at Woodhouse Burial Ground March to May	£61.43 £43.62 £17.81
S Haydon Travel to deliver audit box	£18.54
R Standell Refurbish previous skip area in burial ground	£320.00
Petty cash May-June 2019	£45.20

Credit Card

Land Registry – 8 searches for Local Green Space	£45.00
Facebook boosts:	£29.15
Election briefing	£2.11
Local Green spaces	£6.04
Dementia Cinema	£7.00
Artisan Market	£4.00
Local Green Spaces	£10.00
Amazon – foam panel soundproofing for Room 1 adjoining door	£61.25
Giff gaff – wifi	£25.00
Shutterstock – media graphics monthly fee	£19.00

Natwest - Card fee

£64.00

The meeting closed at 7.08 pm

Signed Date