

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF BIDDULPH TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 14 JULY 2020.

The Mayor welcomed members to the Zoom meeting and read a statement to assist those that were viewing the meeting via Facebook.

PRESENT

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

Sergeant Jamie Machin (Staffordshire Police) and Councillor Keith Flunder (Staffordshire County Council) were also in attendance.

No attendees wished their names to be excluded from the minutes.

1.20 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

To receive verbal or written representations from:

- *Staffordshire County Council representative(s)*

Councillor Flunder advised Councillors that County Council email updates would be fortnightly going forward. County Councillors had received a further allocation of £2000 to help local groups with Covid projects. There is also another fund, led by the Community Foundation for Staffordshire, which may be appropriate for some organisations.

Councillor Flunder has chased up a number of Highways issues that had been raised previously. The footways on Park Lane would be resurfaced over the coming weeks. Councillor Flunder was pushing forward a number of Divisional Highway Programme (DHP) projects.

Councillor Flunder updated Councillors that there are grants available for small businesses and start-up packs for PPE.

Councillor Smith wondered whether PPE packs could be made available for guiding and the Air Training Corps groups. Councillor Flunder would take this forward.

Councillor Yates queried whether there was a criterion for the Councillors grants scheme. He was pleased with the re-surfacing work at Park Lane, but wondered whether there was any progress with the pavement outside Knypersley First School. Councillor Flunder noted that the footway outside the school was a repair, rather than a project. Councillor Flunder confirmed that he and Councillor Lawson were working together to support local organisations with grants.

Councillor Flunder would forward any relevant information to the Chief Officer.

Councillor Salt noted that there had been a car accident on Grange Road and wondered whether speed signs could be installed.

Councillor Flunder would include this within his DHP discussions.

Councillor Rogers noted that there were white markers around potholes; did this mean they would be filled in? Marsh Green Road was particularly bad.

Councillor Sheldon stated that the mini round about on Wharf Road had been eroded again; this needs repairing and re-painting.

Councillor Redfern thanked Councillor Flunder for his work on Park Lane; this appeared to be a good job.

Councillor Jones had been asked to seek clarity on whether trailers would be permitted into the Biddulph Recycling Centre at Bemersley; Councillor Flunder would make enquiries.

- *Staffordshire Police*

Sergeant Jamie Machin gave an update on recent Police activity in the town.

There are issues with drugs at a number of addresses. There have been some good results to date, but there was still more to do; this was a long-term project. There were injunctions on some addresses.

There had been a 5% drop in anti-social behaviour over a twelve-month period. Issues had been around rowdy and inconsiderate behaviour; there had been parties as restrictions were lifted.

There were also issues with vehicles congregating on car parks; targeted work was being undertaken in relation to this.

Councillor Jackson wondered whether Police would be able to enforce the wearing of face masks; he saw the potential for friction. Sergeant Machin stated that the National Police Council were considering this.

Sergeant Machin stated that there was a good team in Biddulph. If a shop calls 101 or 999, the team would attend. It was hoped that shops would take a sensible approach with signage and explanations. Fines would be issued if necessary, but the Police hoped to engage with people.

Councillor Redfern had received complaints from residents at Mill Hayes Road about cars meeting. Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC) would need to take a longer-term view, but it would be helpful to provide some reassurance to residents that patrols were going there.

Sergeant Machin responded that patrols had attended, but had not highlighted anything. Councillor Redfern believed this was happening between 9pm and 1am; the car park is left open. Sergeant Machin would ask patrols to attend, but encouraged residents to call 101 at the time that this was happening.

Councillor Rushton thanked Sergeant Machin for the work at Kingsfield Road. There were still problems and the residents would like a meeting. Sergeant Machin confirmed that a meeting would be possible.

Councillor Rogers wondered whether the Police could assist with out-of-town taxis touting for business. Sergeant Machin noted that this was a SMDC issue, but the Police were happy to support a joint operation to target taxis operating unlawfully.

Councillor Jones noted that there had been reports of fires in the woods at Biddulph Grange Country Park; this should be kept on the radar.

2. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a) To declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests & Dispensations: Councillor Sheldon in anything pertaining to Biddulph in Bloom.
- b) To declare any Other Disclosable Interests: Councillor Rogers' employer had provided a quotation for a dishwasher. The Chief Officer lived near to the location in agenda item 6.

4. MINUTES

- a) The Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Town Council held on 16 June 2020 were approved.
(Minutes to be **signed** when restrictions on social distancing have been relaxed)
- b) The Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 23 June 2020 were received; there was an amendment to SMD/2020/0289.
- c) The Minutes of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee meeting held on 7 July 2020 were approved. (Minutes to be **signed** when restrictions on social distancing have been relaxed) Councillor Hall noted that there would be further discussion on a number of these issues on the agenda.

5. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

Councillor Jones noted that he and Councillor Rushton had been invited to take part in discussions about parking at Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC). The decision had been taken to suspend short-term parking charges for August; this would be for the first three hours. A ticket would be issued, and this would be monitored; the machines were being recalibrated.

Councillor Rogers felt this was good news for traders; he had worked for 46 years on the High Street. This should be done indefinitely, not just for August.

Councillor Jackson felt the Town Council should use this time productively. A survey should be completed on car park and on-street parking. Councillors had objected to parking charges for a number of years. A baseline should be developed to see what is happening.

Councillor Jones agreed that the Town Council should look at the impact and benefit.

Councillor Hart reminded Members that there had been a proposal to monitor footfall at the Finance Strategy and Management Committee meeting.

Councillor Hall felt that a data gathering exercise would be beneficial.

6. ITEM REQUESTED BY COUNCILLOR REDFERN- HIGHWAYS RECOMMENDATION

*To **resolve** that the Town Council will support a request for the installation of double-yellow lines on the single-track road on Conway Road.*

Councillor Redfern noted that the residents in this area were concerned posts/ bollards had been removed. SMDC had been requested to replace these, but there had been a lack of progress.

Councillor Redfern lost his WIFI connection. Councillor Jones proposed that this item be revisited when Councillor Redfern was able to join the meeting.

7. ITEM REQUESTED BY COUNCILLOR JACKSON- PARKING CHARGES IN BIDDULPH

*To **resolve** that the Town Council should write to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council to ask them to suspend car park charges in an endeavour to help High Street businesses.*

*To **consider and approve** any other alternative Town Council intervention.*

Councillor Jackson was happy to withdraw his proposal, given the Mayor's previous update. He looked forward to seeing the data.

Councillor Rogers volunteered to let people know about free parking.

Councillor Hawley was concerned that people are still reticent to shop; this would give a false reading. This project should be completed over a longer period of time.

Councillor Salt was not clear who would be completing this work and what the purpose was. Councillor Jones was not proposing that the Officers carried out this exercise. Councillor Jones felt the 'jury was still out'; there is still a fight to be had.

Councillor Hart wondered what the Town Council could do in September; if the District Council don't continue this project, what can the Town Council do?

Councillor Yates felt the Town Council should promote this project. It must be made clear to people that they need a ticket.

Councillor Rushton had raised the issue of footfall at the meeting at SMDC; costs must not be increased after the month, to cover the loss on the car park.

Councillor Redfern felt that parking charges had been a terrible mistake in Biddulph. The Town Council could implement a parking regime.

Councillor Jackson wondered whether three hours free parking would have an impact on surrounding streets. The Town Council had long-believed charges had a detrimental impact on the High Street. The staff could gather the data; Officers will do what they are asked to do.

Councillor Davies proposed that photos are taken at specific locations and times. This was seconded by Councillor Hall.

Councillor Perkin was not happy for Officers to do this; Councillor Jones would lead and organise a rota. This evidence would then be sent to SMDC.

Councillor Sheldon noted that Station Road should be monitored.

All agreed with Councillor Davies' proposal.

ITEM 6 RESUMED

ITEM REQUESTED BY COUNCILLOR REDFERN- HIGHWAYS RECOMMENDATION

Councillor Redfern confirmed that residents were experiencing difficulties getting out of their drives because of parking on the narrow road. Councillor Redfern would like the Town Council to write in support of this proposal.

Councillor Jones supported this proposal, but was unsure about enforcement.

All agreed; Councillor Redfern thanked colleagues for their support.

8. TO NOTE THAT A REVIEW OF CIVIC ALLOWANCES HAS COMMENCED; THE OUTCOME WILL BE REPORTED TO TOWN COUNCIL IN SEPTEMBER

The Chief Officer noted that there had been concerns that some allocations were too little; some were too great. Councillor Davies had collated some figures from his year as Mayor.

Councillor Rogers queried whether this would include the Town Crier; this Chief Officer confirmed that it would.

9. TO RESOLVE THAT THE EVENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS OFFICER SHOULD BE AN ADDITIONAL SIGNATORY ON THE MAYOR'S CHARITY ACCOUNT

Proposed by Councillor Jones; seconded by Councillor Jackson and agreed.

10. TO APPROVE THE ACTION PLAN FOR 2020-21 (CONSIDERED AT THE FINANCE STRATEGY AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING)

The Chief Officer noted that amendments had been made following consideration at the Finance Strategy and Management Committee meeting. Proposed by Councillor Jones; seconded by Councillor Hart and agreed.

11. 2019-20 ANNUAL RETURN (PROFORMA ATTACHED, FOR INFORMATION)

- a) To complete Section 1 of the Annual Return – the Annual Governance Statement (assertions to be read aloud), confirming that there is a sound system of internal control including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements.

Councillor Hawley moved that all assertions should be marked with a 'yes'; seconded by Councillor Perkin and agreed.

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

Proposed by Councillor Hart; seconded by Councillor Hawley and agreed.

12. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE MANAGEMENT OF BIDDULPH TOWN HALL

The Chief Officer noted that she had written to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) at Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC) to highlight the issues that had been experienced, and the frustrations.

Councillor Jackson suggested that a meeting with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor should be convened, to agree the way forward.

Councillor Jones noted that the Asset Transfer Working Group could consider any operational issues that arise.

13. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE BIDDULPH GRANGE COUNTRY PARK VISITOR CENTRE LEASE

The Chief Officer had also raised the lack of progress with this lease with the CEO at SMDC. There was no one at SMDC that could complete a condition survey.

Councillor Jones would raise this with the Leader at SMDC.

14. ACCOUNTS & FINANCE

To approve expenditure in July and August. Additional expenditure was sent via email in advance of the meeting.

JULY

Expenditure above £5000

None

Expenditure above £500 and below £5000

Salaries (in total)	4091.99
Pension contributions (Local Government Pension Scheme)	1893.79
HMRC	1689.63
D&G Bus Provision of the 93 service	3383.60
Howdens Kitchen for new Office space	573.75

Expenditure below £500

Contribution to 'Over the Garden Gate' competition prizes	100.00
Mileage and expenditure associated with Coronavirus volunteers support: Councillor Nigel Yates	81.90
Councillor Wayne Rogers	133.20
ASH Waste Services Town Burial Ground bins	358.74
Fifteen Group Mobile phone contracts x2 (estimate)	£57.67
Tidysite Provision of bins at Woodhouse Burial Ground	23.10
Countrywide Mowing at Springfield Road	61.40
Business Products Photocopier copies	37.54
Moorside Memorials Levelling and turfing	180.00
Jodie Hancock Tiles for kitchen area	79.96
Sarah Haydon Travel expenses (audit travel to and from Buxton)	36.00
Business Products	

Stationery	20.99
SLCC Membership renewal	363.00
Barry Harrison Drainage at Park Lane Allotment site	25.00
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Premises License- High Street (part)	70.00
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Lease at Congleton Road	90.00
Grenke Photocopier lease (quarterly payment)	439.67
Elizabeth Thompson Internal Auditor	160.00
Information Commissioner's Office Annual fee	40.00
Brian Carter Opening/ closing Woodhouse Burial Ground gates	40.00
Petty Cash	44.56

Credit Card

Buck and Hickman (purchase of hand sanitiser)	97.06
Shutterstock image licensing	19.00
Facebook (promotion of Coronavirus actions and bus changes)	7.04
Amazon (files and labels)	23.39
Congleton Glass (replacement safety glass in roof- new office space)	47.00
Abode Window Films (added to safety glass)	15.00
Amazon (paint for office area)	38.00
Amazon (PPE)	35.53

AUGUST

Expenditure above £5000

None

Expenditure above £500 and below £5000

Salaries (in total)	4091.79
Pension contributions (Local Government Pension Scheme)	1893.79
HMRC	1689.83

D&G Bus Provision of the 93 service (estimate)	3383.60
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Expenditure below £500

ASH Waste Services Town Burial Ground bins	358.74
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Fifteen Group Mobile phone contracts x2 (estimate)	£57.67
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Tidysite Provision of bins at Woodhouse Burial Ground	23.10
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Countrywide Mowing at Springfield Road	61.40
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Brian Carter Opening/ closing Woodhouse Burial Ground gates	40.00
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Petty Cash

Proposed by Councillor Jones; seconded by Councillor Hart and agreed.

The Mayor thanked those members of the public watching the meeting. There was a short comfort break before consideration of confidential items.

Exclusion of the Press and Public

The Chair to move: -

"That, pursuant to Section 100A(2) and (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings whereby it is likely that confidential information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act would be disclosed to the public in breach of the obligation of confidence or exempt information as defined in Section 10 I (1) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act would be disclosed to the public by virtue of the Paragraphs indicated."

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

15. FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL INVESTIGATION, TO APPROVE ADDITIONAL SPEND ON:

- a) Purchase of a dishwasher for upstairs kitchen

- b) Purchase of toilet, sink and unit for Town Council bathroom

- c) Purchase of a mobile phone and contract for caretaking staff

- d) To enter into a contract for the provision of IT equipment and services in the Town Council office space.

The meeting closed at 8.05pm.

Signed..... Date.....