

MINUTES OF THE CIVIC COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12 FEBRUARY 2019

Councillor Davies proposed that standing orders be suspended to allow Councillor Flunder to address the meeting. This was agreed.

Councillor Flunder gave a briefing on items that would be discussed at the Full meeting of the County Council on 14 February 2019.

- School crossing patrols would remain in place, as currently.
- The decision on SCVYS would be reversed. He would meet with Mr Capostagno of the Biddulph Youth and Community Zone to see what support could be offered.
- The members Community Fund had been cut to £2,500
- Each member had been given an additional £20,000 towards large capital highway projects; Councillor Flunder was unsure of the timescales, he would contact Parish and Town Councils to see what could be done that was meaningful. This would be in addition to the £7,500 from the previous year, which could be used for new projects with conditions. Councillor Rogers asked if repairs could be carried out more effectively. Councillor Jackson noted that not all the funds would be spent in Biddulph.
- Councillors Flunder and Lawson would jointly put pressure on the District Council cabinet to find out what was going on, from a County Council perspective.

Councillor Jackson asked if the County Council would be refilling grit bins in Biddulph. Councillor Flunder replied that he had asked for information and wanted to be informed of any bins that had not been refilled.

Councillor McGuinness had concerns about the Future High Street Fund; Cheadle being the preferred town. Councillor Flunder was willing to raise any specific questions that were sent to him prior to the meeting.

Councillor Davies thanked Councillor Flunder.

Standing orders were resumed.

PRESENT

The Mayor - Councillor McGuinness
The Deputy Mayor - Councillor Davies
Councillor Baddeley
Councillor Hall
Councillor Hart
Councillor Jackson
Councillor Rogers
Councillor Rushton
Councillor Sheldon
Councillor Whilding

also in attendance

Councillor Hawley
Councillor Nicosia

56. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from

Councillor Court
Councillor Jones
Councillor Lawson
Councillor Lovatt
Councillor Salt
Councillor Swift

57. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests & Dispensations: None
- b) Other Interests: Minute 62a Councillor Hart was a member of the Moorlands Partnership Board

58. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 7 January 2019 were signed as an accurate record.

59. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATED PLAN OF THE STATION ROAD SITE FOLLOWING SELECTION OF A CONTRACTOR AND VERBAL UPDATE ON TIMESCALES/FUNDING

The Chief Officer distributed an updated architect's drawing of the site, with the three circles that would be developed.

The Chief Officer had received confirmation that the contractor was happy to begin the work in March 2019.

The S106 team at the District Council had reacted positively and there was nothing to suggest that the funds would not come directly to the Town Council; a report was being written to seek approval.

Councillor Hart proposed that this work proceed. Councillor Jackson said that Sarah and her team, and the Chair, deserved a round of applause.

60. TO CONSIDER THE RECENT ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE COUNTY COUNCIL ARE CONSIDERING PARKING CHARGES ON THE HIGH STREET

Councillor Jackson wondered what the County Council were playing at. They had sold land outside the town centre boundary for development and had now introduced this ludicrous suggestion. This Council should protect in the strongest possible terms. This was a ridiculous thing to put forward at a time when major councils were removing parking charges.

Councillor Hawley thought that whoever thought of this must be 'brain dead' and wondered if they were trying to kill Biddulph.

Councillor Rogers added that the bays that had been created in north High Street, Station Road and Tunstall Road had been a major boost to the High

street. Blue badge holders did abuse the system. A flow of traffic was necessary to keep the High Street viable.

Councillor Davies noted that the Town Council had worked hard to introduce the extra bays.

Councillor McGuinness stated that Helen Fisher was in charge of the proposal and was testing the water. He wondered how this would help the High Street regeneration; the Town Council should say that this is not acceptable.

Councillor Hall noted that this was raised at the meeting of the District Council Cabinet; the Leader had vowed to fight it in the Moorlands.

Councillor Hart added that a number of years ago he had chaired a committee where this suggestion had been mooted. The County and District Councils had looked jointly at installing meters in the three towns, but it was not viable in Biddulph or Cheadle; he could not see what had changed in 7-8 years.

Councillor Baddeley thought this a ludicrous idea; would Blue Badge holders have to pay, if not, there would be no income at all.

Councillor Flunder was invited to respond. Councillor Flunder noted that the main purpose of the idea was for improvements in traffic flow in towns such as Burton and Lichfield; this was not an issue in Biddulph.

Councillor Flunder would take these points forward.

Councillor Davies added that there was legislation in place; but the wardens did not patrol adequately. Councillor Davies felt that the relationship between the Town and County Council had deteriorated over the past years. The Town Deal was in place, but it was now largely declarations not dialogue. Biddulph was the most proactive Town Council in the District, if not Staffordshire. The Town Deal needs to be restored.

Councillor Nicosia noted that 14 months ago traders had asked for a loading bay for the north High street. The County Council had asked for proof that this was what traders wanted. Letters were delivered, positive responses received which were forwarded to the County Council, nothing had been done.

61. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE 2018 ARTISAN MARKETS AND STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL FUNDING

The Chief Officer noted that members were already aware of most of the items in the tabled document, but this pulled the past years' developments together. Income and expenditure was detailed. It was noted that money requested to help with additional signage costs had not yet been received from the District Council. There was an understanding that additional funding would be forthcoming in the coming year. Updates were also provided in relation to NABMA membership, the climate in which the Biddulph markets are operating, footfall analysis (which would be further developed in 2019), garage changes (£2,600 per year) and future risks.

Councillor Hart added that Fresh Food Friday was immensely successful. It has the effect that people come in to town because of it. It does a lot of good. There was a

vacancy for a fourth trader. Miss Hancock noted that the vacancy had been filled; a local lady would be selling cakes.

Councillor Baddeley asked why the market was not held on a Saturday, it was explained that nearby Congleton held a charter and would not permit this.

Councillor Rogers added that there was more footfall in Biddulph on a Friday than a Saturday.

Councillor McGuinness noted that part of the expenditure was for highways signage, which had not been budgeted for. Councillor Davies added that appropriate signage had been purchased, there was a small charge for placing it appropriately.

62. HERITAGE CONSIDERATIONS:

a) TO APPROVE THE PURCHASE OF A BENCH FOR THE GILLOW HEATH STATION SITE

The Chief Officer noted that Moorlands Partnership Board (MPB) had given £641 towards the cost of a bench; it needed to be bought and the Town Council would be required to match-fund this, as is the requirement with MPB funding. The cost would be in the region of £800 per bench.

Councillor Hart noted that there would be an additional bench provided by a member of the public. The proposed bench would be in the pattern of those of the old North Staffordshire Railway. Councillor Rogers noted that Biddulph in Bloom had been asked to provide a memorial bench on route 55 near to the junction with Wharf Road, he felt this should be in the same pattern and would contact Councillor Sheldon.

Councillor Davies proposed purchasing the bench using the £641 from MPB with the Council making up the shortfall. This was agreed. Councillor Hart abstained from the vote (as a member of MPB) but would continue to liaise with the individual who wished to purchase an additional bench.

b) TO APPROVE A LISTED BUILDING CONSENT APPLICATION FOR OVERTON ROAD TROUGHS

Councillor Davies proposed that this application be made. This was agreed.

63. TO NOTE THE REMOVAL OF THE PLAY EQUIPMENT AT THE PADDOCK PLAY AREA AND RECEIVE THE FEEDBACK FROM 420 PLAY SURVEYS COMPLETED BY YOUNG PEOPLE IN BIDDULPH, AS PART OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN DATA COLLECTION (CHARTS ATTACHED)

The Chief Officer noted that question 3 in the play survey information showed the perception of young people that there were insufficient places to play in the town.

Councillor Davies wondered if the removed items from The Paddock should be re-sited, or new equipment purchased.

Councillor Nicosia added that she had struggled to find somewhere for her children to play in Biddulph South, the only place where equipment could be located was

adjacent to the skate park; there should be something there for younger children. Her children used to play at Brown Lees.

Councillor Davies noted that the equipment had been removed from a central area, adding that there may be a requirement that this is replaced elsewhere.

Councillor Jackson asked what state the equipment was in. Councillor Davies thought it was probably at the end of its life.

Councillor Jackson advised caution around the skate park, it had been a tortuous process having it installed.

Councillor Hawley asked why the equipment had been moved. Councillor Davies responded that it was a result of anti-social activity; the area was hidden.

Councillor Baddeley added that there were only two swings and nothing for younger children.

Councillor Davies suggested that the large grassed area on Dorset Drive might be a suitable location.

The Chief Officer would seek the views of SMDC in relation to this area.

Councillor Nicosia asked about future plans for the Paddock area. Councillor Davies thought that Councillor Sheldon might have some proposals.

64. TO RECEIVE FEEDBACK IN RELATION TO THE FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND, AND TO CONSIDER A DRAFT LETTER TO BE SENT TO THE DISTRICT COUNCIL (TO BE TABLED)

Councillor Hall reported that the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC) Cabinet had met that day and had requested that a set of questions be clarified. Officers were asked to engage with central government immediately for clarification and clear definition: was it one bid or two, one High Street, or two? It was hoped to put pressure onto the government to make changes to the Fund, and weight should be added to the case made by authorities that were challenging the criteria for this.

Councillor Hall had made Officers agree to look actively for other pots of money to help develop plans for Biddulph.

Councillor Jackson is a representative on a group that represents previous coal mining areas, attended by bigger metropolitan and unitary authorities; they were up in arms and made representations. Councillor Jackson had sent reports to Dai Lerner.

Councillor Jackson felt that the whole SMDC report was slanted in favour of Cheadle. Cheadle had more retail outlets than Biddulph, but a smaller population was supporting this. We had not been given the chance to put our case forward; the report was biased. There was also no detail about what the project would look like. Biddulph hasn't been able to 'put our make-up on'.

Councillor Hall noted that Cheadle was a priority through the Growth Strategy.

Councillor Jackson added that Officers should already be actively seeking pots of money anyway, without prompting.

Councillor McGuinness noted that Biddulph retail was performing worse than the national average. He felt that the County Council was supporting the bid for Cheadle in order that part of the money from the Future High Street Fund could be used for the Cheadle ring-road project.

Councillor Davies noted that the Future High Street Fund was only in the early stages, no money had been allocated; successful towns would be invited to work on a bid.

Councillor Jackson added that part of the criteria could be for Highway work; the County Council had ruled out working with Biddulph very early in the process.

Councillor Davies added that Biddulph may be excluded by an underlying strategy that this Council knows nothing about.

Councillor Hawley asked why the County Council would be involved in a District Council bid, unless it was true that a decision had been made to use the Fund for the long-awaited Cheadle by-pass.

Councillor Hart had lost faith in the Town Deal over the past year. He had tried to instigate a meeting, but the County Council did not want to engage.

Councillor Davies would work with the Chief Officer to add the points raised to the draft letter.

The Chief Officer would include the points raised in the masterplan which had been developed as part of the Neighbourhood Plan; this information had already been sent to Dai Lerner.

Councillor Davies wondered if it was worth including the ambiguity of High Street(s) and that Biddulph Town Council was happy to work on a bid in its own right to the letter.

Councillor Jackson wondered what was the definition of 'retail premises'.

Councillor Baddeley noted that there was a lesser diversity of shops in Biddulph compared to Cheadle.

Councillor Davies proposed sending the amended letter. This was agreed.

65. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chair wondered if Councillor Flunder should be invited to report to each meeting of the Civic Committee. It was agreed that if he had anything to report this could be done by suspending standing orders.

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

The meeting closed at 9.12 pm

Signed Date