

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 19 JUNE 2018

PRESENT

The Mayor Councillor McGuinness
The Deputy Mayor – Councillor Davies
Councillor Baddeley
Councillor Hall
Councillor Hart
Councillor Jackson
Councillor Jones
Councillor Lawson
Councillor Rogers
Councillor Rushton
Councillor Salt
Councillor Sheldon
Councillor Swift
Councillor Walley
Councillor Whilding

Also in attendance

Councillor Court
Councillor Harper
Councillor Redfern

9. 18 APOLOGIES

Councillor Hart
Councillor Nicosia
Councillor Wood

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- i) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests & Dispensations: Councillor Sheldon any matters pertaining to Biddulph in Bloom.
- ii) Other Interests: Councillors Hart, Harper and Jones Biddulph Grange Country Park Friends

11. MINUTES

It was moved to sign the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on Tuesday 15 May 2018.

12. TO CONSIDER THE FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF BIDDULPH GRANGE COUNTRY PARK VISITOR CENTRE (HEADS OF TERMS ATTACHED)

Councillor Jones noted that this Council had been invited to take over future management of the Visitor Centre at the Biddulph Grange Country Park, which would include carrying out repairs. Biddulph Town Council had received permission to investigate the work needed and to obtain quotes. Councillor Jones noted that following this investigation he would go back to the District and suggest the changes that would be needed to the Heads of Terms, adding that all of the findings and

costs would be brought before the Town Council before negotiations with the District took place.

A peppercorn rent would be payable after the two Councils had reached a common ground. It would not be the 'Friends' group that would be taking this on.

Councillor proposed this action; seconded by Councillor Hart.

Councillor Redfern noted that section 19 rather tied the hands of the Town Council for producing an income in the future.

Councillor Davies raised concerns about section 14.

Councillor Jones suggested that all comments about the agreement should be emailed to the Chief Officer, with caution as the information was confidential.

Councillor Jones proposed that the document is discussed and formulated to the satisfaction of the Town Council at a special meeting of the Finance Committee.

Councillor Harper suggested that Councillors Hall and Jackson should look into the funding. The Chief Officer and Councillor Jones would obtain quotes for the works needed. All agreed.

13. SOCIAL EXCLUSION:

a) ITEM REQUESTED BY COUNCILLOR SALT - 'HOLIDAY HUNGER' IN THE TOWN

Councillor Salt gave statistical information about holiday hunger in North Staffordshire. She requested a fund of £500 for the ambition to launch a holiday project to alleviate hunger in this area. The scheme would run for one week during the school summer holidays or the October half term holiday.

Councillor Jones asked if this would be 'seed money' to get the project off the ground. Councillor Salt would develop a scheme further, which would provide food to those most in need.

Councillor Rogers asked how old the figures were; Councillor Salt responded that they were from 2015. Councillor Rogers felt that the East Ward was in a far better position than three years ago and wondered, if people were short of food why were they obese?

Councillor Salt responded that sugary fatty foods were cheaper than healthier choices.

Councillor Jackson thought this was an interesting initiative, noting that you tend not to see problems on your own doorstep. He felt that as initiatives were running in the City, this Council should make contact to see what was being done and how it could be facilitated in Biddulph. Councillor Jackson was happy to support the fund of £500.

Councillor Jones felt the maximum should be £500.

Councillor Hart thought that contact should be made with other people who run similar schemes, such as Food Banks, to see what ideas they have and to

access resources to tap into. We must ensure that the money is used wisely and that all five wards are served.

Councillor McGuinness agreed, adding that we should contact Biddulph Churches Together. St Lawrence's Church will run its Vibes event for one week during the summer holidays, and will offer a midday meal for £1 extra.

Councillor Sheldon noted that the Biddulph Youth and Community Zone also ran a very useful scheme of distributing groceries; an extension of their work.

Councillor Harper asked if the problem had been flagged up at the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) or at Children's Social Services; he added that we should cast the net out to get accurate information and so properly target those in need.

Councillor Jones added that maybe there were agencies that could assist, but needed support.

Councillor Lawson suggested that those who ran breakfast clubs at school could be contacted.

Councillor Salt knew that there was a lot of work to be done and would move the project forward.

Councillor Jones added that there was a willingness to spend the money.

Councillor Jackson queried that if Councillor Salt came across an organisation which needed £50 (for example) to make a difference, could there be a pot available to dip into, if needed. It would be stupid to miss help for such a small amount, whilst waiting for the cycle of meetings – members could be contacted for approval by email.

Councillor Jackson proposed this, seconded by Councillor Rushton and agreed.

Councillor Lawson suggested contacting the man who had taken over at BRIC, who came to talk to Council a few months ago.

Councillor Jackson noted that all avenues to help disadvantaged residents would be considered.

b) UPDATE FROM THE CHIEF OFFICER ABOUT HOMELESSNESS PROVISION

The Chief Officer had raised the issue of support for people who were at risk of homelessness at the meeting held in March 2018, following contact with a number of agencies that wanted to help during particularly cold periods. Since then the Chief Officer had held discussions with Support Staffordshire and with CAB who had identified that there was no meeting place or hub where service providers could discuss services available and identify gaps. It would be useful if Biddulph Town Council could provide the facility for quarterly meetings to take place.

This initiative was proposed by Councillor Hart and seconded by Councillor Rushton and agreed.

Councillor Jackson noted that discussion should include provision for both visible homeless and also invisible e.g. sofa surfers, who could become easily become homeless.

14. UPDATE FROM COUNCILLOR MCGUINNESS - DIABETIC EYE SCREENING

Councillor McGuinness noted that those who had diabetes had to visit an optician for regular eye screening. Currently there were two opticians that offered this service free of charge, five days a week. Recently Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Partnership NHS Trust had decreed that from 1 October 2018 this service would be stopped. The NHS would be delivering the service in-house. For the transitional period this would be offered for one day a week at the Health Centre on Wharf Road. Councillor McGuinness had raised his concerns with the Patient Participation Group. He noted that the service would also be offered to Biddulph residents at Tunstall Health Centre and Sandyford Fire Station.

Councillor Rogers noted that his elderly father had been told to go to Tunstall; he added that Cottons would offer the test but would now charge £10. He noted that Congleton opticians still offered the test free of charge.

Councillor Jackson is diabetic and noted that following the test the patient was not allowed to drive for at least two hours. If there was adequate capacity he would be in favour of screening being held one day a week at the Health Centre. This was prevention, it picked up problems early. He did not know how long funding would continue; this was 'another bite' that commissioners were taking out of the pie, it was very, very important to test those with type two diabetes.

Councillor Salt noted that her late father also had type two diabetes and had died of renal failure. Diabetes was a very nasty disease if not controlled; Councillor Salt was very concerned at restrictions where the service could only be accessed for one day a week. She proposed writing to the Patient Participation Group noting that it was essential that the facility remained in Biddulph.

Councillor McGuinness noted that Cottons Opticians was fully booked for several weeks.

Councillor Sheldon had type two diabetes and felt that the system was excellent at the moment.

Councillor Rushton agreed with everybody, she had type two diabetes and had recently had several injections into her eye. She felt that everyone should have the test.

Councillor Hall had type two diabetes and felt it was very important to keep the service in Biddulph. Biddulph would be the only significant town in the area without a service. This Council should strike very, very hard to maintain the service in Biddulph; we need it in our town and close to the medical facility.

Councillor Jones noted that the test did not require a person with significant skills. In her previous job, his wife had carried out tests following only two days training. Councillor Jones proposed writing to the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in very strong terms.

Councillor Jackson proposed writing to the two Health Scrutiny Committees at the District Council. Councillor Jones would speak to the Chair.

Councillor Salt noted that this was not under the remit of the CCG. Preventative care falls under the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Partnership NHS Trust

Councillor Lawson noted that it could fall under the remit of Alan White at the County Council.

Councillor McGuinness proposed that a letter is written, seconded by Councillor Salt and agreed.

15. CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

1. Training Courses

Local Councillor Training Course – Wednesday 25 July 2018

A Local Councillor Training Course has been arranged for Wednesday 25 July 2018. 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 Principles

Date: Wednesday 25 July 2018

Time: 7.00pm – 9.00pm

Venue: Trentham / Rudyard Suite, Staffordshire Place One, Tipping Street, Stafford ST16 2LP

Cost: £20.00 for the first delegate, £15.00 for the second and £10.00 for subsequent delegates from the same affiliated council. The prices are doubled for unaffiliated councils.

Kidsgrove Local Councillor Outreach Training Course – Tuesday 7 August 2018

An Outreach Councillor Training Course has been arranged for Tuesday 7 August 2018. 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 Principles

Date: Tuesday 7 August 2018

Time: 6.00pm – 8.00pm

Venue: Kidsgrove Town Council, Town Hall, Liverpool Road, Kidsgrove, Stoke-on-Trent ST7 4EL

Cost: £20.00 for the first delegate, £15.00 for the second and £10.00 for subsequent delegates from the same affiliated council. The prices are doubled for unaffiliated councils.

2. Proposed next steps for Staffordshire Library Service

The county council is continuing to transform Staffordshire's Library Service so that it remains relevant in the digital age, maintains a presence at the heart of our communities and is affordable for the future. On 12th June papers proposing the next steps for the service were published in readiness for consideration at a meeting of Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee on 20th June. The recommendations in the Select Committee paper have been informed by our learning from our Community Managed Library programme to date, the careful consideration of the views of over 3,500 people who participated in a public consultation earlier this year, and the latest data on library usage. The key proposals are:

- We look to transfer four more libraries to community management from April 2019. Based on an analysis of visits, issues, active borrowers, library membership and computer use, these libraries are Cheadle, Clayton, Eccleshall and Penkridge. We will also be seeking a new community partner to manage Cheslyn Hay Library.
- We trial new self-service technology in Stafford Library to allow registered users access to the building outside core hours and extend this to Penkridge if it does not transfer to community management
- We revise the route of the Mobile and Travelling Library Service based on the principle that we prioritise visits to isolated communities with the greatest need

Please read the paper for [more detail around these proposals](#).

Staffordshire's Community Managed Library programme

We are proud to have 22 libraries across Staffordshire which are already community managed and delivered, or in the process of becoming so. In these libraries we are working with a range of local groups, a health trust, a church, Rotarians and a business enterprise group. One group, the Werrington Community Volunteer Group, has just received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service – the equivalent of the MBE for voluntary groups.

As part of the consultation, we were overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of over a dozen community groups who expressed an interest in taking on one of the four libraries we have now identified for community management and over 400 people who offered to volunteer at their local library.

Timetable for decisions

Proposals around the next steps for Staffordshire’s Library Service will be taken through the following public decision-making process:

12th June: Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee paper published

20th June: Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee meeting

9th July: Cabinet paper published

18th July: Cabinet meeting

24th July: Call-in period on Cabinet decision ends

If you have any questions or would like to get in touch. Please drop us a line at connectedlibraries@staffordshire.gov.uk

Councillor Hart noted that it would be beneficial to look at Blythe Bridge and Werrington; Councillor Jones agreed. A summer road trip would be arranged.

3. Forest of Mercia

Letter attached about the provision of free trees.

Councillor Sheldon advised that a site is identified and a plan drawn up prior to ordering additional trees.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm

Signed Date