

MINUTES FROM THE MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 10 NOVEMBER 2020

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

PRESENT

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

Also in attendance: Councillor Flunder and Councillor Lawson from Staffordshire County Council; PC Leake from Staffordshire Police.

36. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

To receive verbal or written representations from:

- **Staffordshire Police**

PC Leake thanked Councillors for their help and support for the Remembrance Sunday event. There had been a number of compliments that the event had been tastefully marked and well managed.

Anti-social behaviour was down by 6%, with the highest issues being around neighbour disputes. Crime is down overall by 5.25%.

There would be an Environment Agency operation the following day; the Chief Officer would receive an update.

Police had ticketed the owner of a vehicle on Biddulph Moor; Councillor Jones thanked the Police for their efforts in relation to this matter.

There had been a caravan theft in Biddulph and enhanced patrols around Carriage Drive.

Councillor Salt asked that the Police look for 'boy racers' on the industrial estate at Brown Lees; there have also been fireworks around 1-2am.

PC Leake noted that initiatives in Hanley and Cheshire had moved crime into the town; patrols would be increased. 'Digital 101' was a quick way to report crime.

Councillor Yates also noted that there was an issue in this area, around Prospect Way. There had also been an increase in cars around Halls Road. PC Leake was aware of issues at Halls Road; Police had been engaging with teens in this area to explain about social distancing.

Councillor Redfern noted that there was no gate at the Mill Hayes car park; he had contacted Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC) with this request.

Councillor Hart also noted that quad bikes were still around in the town.

PC Leake identified that there were now extra Police officers in Biddulph; there would now be 9 Officers in the town.

Councillor Sheldon had received complaints about Mill Hayes. There were also issues around the Greenway Bank Country Park with parking. It was lovely to see families, but there were a number of issues associated with more parking. PC Leake noted that parking enforcement was necessary in this area.

PC Leake informed members that PCSO Johnson had left the previous week; he asked that his thanks were conveyed to Councillors. Councillor Jones felt that PCSO Johnson would be sorely missed.

- **Staffordshire County Council representative(s)**

Councillor Flunder had visited the town in his capacity as Chairman of the District Council for the Remembrance Sunday event; he thanked Councillors.

Councillor Flunder had facilitated a visit from the High Sheriff to the town. Councillor Flunder had encouraged the Town Council to apply for additional funding to support community groups in the town.

Councillor Flunder thanked the Chief Officer for her assistance in providing feedback to a cross-party working group on the role of the community sector in the town.

Councillor Flunder had passed on the request that the Town Council hosts another testing day for asymptomatic people.

Councillor Flunder would facilitate a Conway Road Green Working Group.

Councillor Flunder provided an update in relation to County Council activities; County buildings were closed and surgeries were being held virtually.

Councillor Jones noted that the testing sessions had not been well advertised by the County; the Town Council had advertised these via social media.

Councillor Redfern clarified that the purpose of the Working Group around the Conway Road Green was to identify a solution; funding is not specifically for double yellow lines.

Councillor Yates wondered whether there was any progress with the flooding on Tunstall Road; Councillor Flunder would enquire again.

Councillor Yates was keen to ensure more County Council investment in the Biddulph Valley Way.

The Mayor confirmed that attendees will be named in the Minutes, unless otherwise instructed.

37. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and reasons for absence approved for Councillor Adams.

38. 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: None

39. MINUTES

a) The Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 13 October 2020 (Minutes to be signed when restrictions on social distancing have been relaxed) were approved.

b) The Minutes of the Recreation and Amenities Committee held on 13 October 2020 were received.

c) The Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 20 October 2020 were received.

d) The Minutes of the Town and Community Committee held on 20 October 2020 were received.

40. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor noted that he had 'resurrected' the Mayor's Civic Award. Anyone who had completed exceptional voluntary work, whether in fundraising, the arts, or other areas could be nominated. The deadline would be 31 March 2021; there would be a good prize and complementary tickets to the Mayor's Ball.

The Mayor wished to make a donation to an organisation in the town at the end of this year and asked Councillors to identify any possibilities.

41. ITEM REQUESTED BY COUNCILLOR HART

'This Council will resist all and every attempt to incorporate Biddulph into Stoke-on-Trent, either at local government or parliamentary level.'

Councillor Hart introduced this item by noting that there was again discussion about local government reform and reorganisation. This had been postponed until 2021. Councillor Hart identified that people in Biddulph have a 'dread' of being incorporated into Stoke-on-Trent. There is a perception that there is bad decision-making.

Councillor Jackson raised a 'point of order': why was this being discussed tonight?

Councillor Jones responded that this was a legitimate discussion. Councillor Jackson wondered how Town Councillors could vote on something that doesn't exist. Councillor Jones stated that this was a motion to determine the Council's attitude.

Councillor Hart continued; there had been three decades of 'bad press' in the Stoke-on-Trent papers. It is important to have a discussion so that people know where the Town Council stands on this issue.

Councillor Hawley started to discuss the motion. Councillor Jackson raised a 'point of order': this motion should be seconded.

Councillor Harper seconded the motion raised by Councillor Hart.

Councillor Hawley continued; he believed that Planning was becoming less democratic. This was a money saving exercise and democracy would pay the price; decision-making was being moved away from the people. Councillor Hawley did not believe that people wanted their Council Tax to prop up a failing authority. The Town Council should make their feelings known and fight any merger.

Councillor Salt noted that the White Paper had not been published; Councillors can't know the content. Councillor Jones clarified that the White Paper was not part of the motion. Councillor Salt felt it would be appropriate to lobby Conservative Members of Parliament (MPs).

Councillor Yates raised a 'point of clarification': should the proposal be read aloud by the proposer? Councillor Yates had some issues with the way the proposal was written. For example, does 'this Council' mean until the next election, or in perpetuity? Do Councillors have the legal ability to commit the Town Council to a long-term position?

Councillor Jones stated that Councillors should vote on what they think now; this may be changed by this administration. Councillor Jones read the motion.

Councillor Yates queried the words 'will resist'; was this motion suggesting that Councillors should break the law?

Councillor Salt raised a 'point of order': Independents have close associations with the Conservatives, including the MP.

Councillor Jones took offence at this statement. Councillor Rogers also noted that he did not support any party, but would fight not to be in Stoke-on-Trent. He would prefer to stay in the Moorlands.

Councillor Brady was concerned that if this motion is approved, the Town Council may not be able to respond to any consultation. Councillor Jones did not believe this was the case. Councillor Jackson did not think the Town Council could discuss these issues. The Chief Officer read section 7 of the Standing Orders.

Councillor Jackson felt the Town Council should ban unicorn hunting on Biddulph Moor next time; Councillors were being asked to vote on something that doesn't exist, and we don't know that it will exist.

Councillor Redfern stated that he had supported a resistance to joining with Stoke-on-Trent previously. He did share the frustrations of Councillor Jackson and others; it may be more timely to consider this at another time.

Councillor Hall wondered whether the 'deal was usually done' by the time a White Paper emerged; views should be expressed before the White Paper is published. Councillor Salt stated that White Papers are not 'done deals'.

Councillor Yates noted that Conservative governments wanted to abolish second tier authorities; Stoke-on-Trent is a unitarian authority, which may stay in its own right. Staffordshire Moorlands will not exist. There was the most important public health emergency in a century going on at the moment; this was nonsense.

Councillor Hart re-read the proposal and requested a named vote:

Councillor Baddeley- no response heard
Councillor Barlow- Against
Councillor Brady- Abstained
Councillor Davies- Against
Councillor Garvey- For
Councillor Hall- For
Councillor Harper- For
Councillor Hart- For
Councillor Hawley- For
Councillor Jackson- Abstained
Mayor- Councillor Jones- For
Councillor McLoughlin- For
Councillor Perkin- For
Councillor Redfern- For
Councillor Rogers- For
Deputy Mayor- Councillor Rushton- Abstained
Councillor Salt- Abstained
Councillor Sheldon- For
Councillor Smith- Abstained
Councillor Yates- Abstained

The motion was carried.

42. STANDING AGENDA ITEM- COVID RESPONSE UPDATE

The Chief Officer updated Members that she had applied for funding from the County Council; there would be five areas of work in relation to reimbursing volunteer expenses, making the Town Hall a safe environment, building relationships with communities in relation to social isolation, food provision for extremely vulnerable residents, and publicising information about Covid arrangements.

The Town Hall had been a test centre; there had been some hiccups, but this was a learning process.

Flu clinics and Everyone Health clinics were ongoing throughout this period.

The Town Hall is not open at the moment; this mirrors the decisions of the District and County Council. This is disappointing.

Councillor Jackson wondered whether the Town Hall could be used as a vaccination venue. Councillor Jones agreed; this could be a revenue stream.

Councillor Salt wondered whether the Town Council could thank organisations that were supporting the community; Councillor Jones agreed to do this. Councillor Jones urged members to contact the Chief Officer if they felt they could help.

43. STANDING AGENDA ITEM- TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE MANAGEMENT OF BIDDULPH TOWN HALL, INCLUDING VERBAL FEEDBACK FROM THE ASSET TRANSFER WORKING GROUP

The Chief Officer noted that there had been an Asset Transfer Working Group meeting. There were three areas of work to report back to Councillors:

- i) There would be a Repairs, Replacements and Upgrades Policy developed. The Town Council was now a custodian of this building.
- ii) There were issues with the current fire monitoring arrangements.
- iii) There would be an Approved Suppliers/ Providers Policy developed.

Officers were also looking at existing and new contracts to identify savings.

There were no questions.

44. TO RECEIVE THE DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT (sent in advance of the meeting) AND TO CONSIDER WHEN WOULD BE AN APPROPRIATE TIME TO HOLD THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

The Chief Officer ran through the Draft Annual Report; the publication of this had been delayed from the usual Annual Town Meeting as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. The Chief Officer updated the public watching about the purpose of the Annual Town Meeting; this is not a Town Council meeting.

Councillor Jones noted that the Town Council was not legally obliged to have a Town Meeting in the current environment. The proposal was to hold this in 2021; Councillor Hall seconded this proposal.

There was discussion about whether there could be a hybrid Town Meeting and when this could be held; Councillor Jones noted that this would be as soon as possible.

Councillor Yates wondered whether this Annual Report could be displayed for the clinics in the Town Hall. Councillor Jones felt this was a good idea.

Councillor Davies thanked the Chief Officer for the report; this sheds the town in a good light, this is a 'sparkling document'. This town offers a fantastic standard of life for people.

Councillor Jones noted that the Town Council gives a lot of money to the voluntary sector.

There was a vote on the proposal to hold the Annual Town Meeting in 2021, as soon as possible. Approved.

45. UPDATE ON HEALTH AND SAFETY MEETING AND CONSIDERATION OF A COUNCILLOR MONITORING ROLE

The Chief Officer noted that there had been previous discussions about compliance issues and the need for a revised Health and Safety Policy. The Chief Officer had met with David Owen, whose role was to advise about health and safety requirements. David would provide an annual report to the Town Council and would carry out 6-monthly health and safety meetings and annual fire risk assessments. There would also be a series of staff training sessions.

David Owen had recommended that, similar to the Monitoring Councillor role for finance, there should be a Health and Safety Councillor role. This would be an 'audit' role.

Councillor Jones nominated Councillor Harper for this position; seconded by Councillor Hawley. There were no further nominations. It was agreed that Councillor Harper would take on this role.

46. ACCOUNTS & FINANCE

a) To approve accounts and Finance for November 2020

Expenditure above £5000

Biddulph in Bloom (2 nd quarter payment of grant)	6250.00
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Prism Solutions

New IT hardware and installation (to be paid in two instalments, at the beginning of the project and upon satisfactory completion) inc. VAT	13047.19
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Protech

Replacement lamps, testing and installation of Christmas lights	5106.00
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Expenditure above £500 and below £5000

Hanley Print Services

400 calendars	1068.00
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MC Cleaning

Cleaning at Wharf Road toilets and Visitor Centre toilets	2444.05
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D&G Bus

93 Bus service	3383.60
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EON

Highway Lighting Maintenance and Energy	3723.89
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Expenditure below £500

Protech

Replacement of catenary wire for Christmas Lights	766.32
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Hanley Print Services

2x Christmas banners for A527	204.00
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CHD	
Cleaning products, towels and hand sanitiser	76.63
MC Janitorial	
Toilet rolls (Visitor Centre)	11.70
Business Products	
Stationery items	101.25
Royal British Legion (Biddulph and District)	
Remembrance wreath	25.00
Countrywide Grounds Maintenance	
Springfield Road	61.40
Tidysite	
Woodhouse Burial Ground bins	23.10
Hanley Print Services	
Covid banner, minute paper, receipt books, compliment slips	534.00
Ash Waste	
Town Burial Ground bins	372.84
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council	
Professional Health and Safety advice	182.73
Business Products	
Photocopies	47.11
Skelhorne Jewellers	
3 Past Mayor's lapel medals	120.96
Brian Carter	
Expenses at Woodhouse Burial Ground	40.00
Katelyn Ball	
Expenses at Wharf Road toilets (5 weeks)	100.00
Myers and Co	
Employment law advice (November)	150.00
Sarah Haydon	
Cable ties (inc. heavy duty)	24.65
Credit Card	
Facebook boost	6.00
Giff Gaff	15.00
Amazon (2x replacement hoover parts and shower cleaner)	23.14
Survey Monkey	408.00
Arrow County Supplies (Masks and gloves)	169.17

Shutterstock- images	19.00
Giff Gaff	8.00

Councillor Harper raised a query in relation to the role of Ash Waste

b) To approve **December** 2020 accounts.

Usual accounts received are:

- D&G Bus- Provision of the 93 service
- Salaries
- HMRC
- Pensions
- Petty Cash
- Ash Waste
- Tidysite
- Fifteen
- Brian Carter
- Katelyn Ball
- Business Products
- Countrywide
- MC Cleaning

c) To approve **Supplementary Accounts**, received after the agenda has been published.

Petty Cash	37.90
HMRC	2800.08
Pensions	
(including all backdated contributions)	8099.78
Salaries	9822.52
Protech (Christmas lights installation, repairs, removal and storage) (two invoices)	20,064
Aaron Locksmiths (installation of 2x key pads)	355
Councillor Sylvia Rushton (contribution towards Christmas lights project)	500
Npower (Christmas Lights service charge)	11.52
SMDC (2019-20 and April- Aug 2020 caretaking costs)	9893.27
Biddulph People's Project (scrap book project)	64

Councillor Jones informed the public that the next meeting would commence after a short break.

In this break, Councillor Jones urged Councillors to consider content that was shared on social media, and reminded Councillors about the Code of Conduct. This was not an agenda item and there was no motion.

The meeting closed at 7.40pm.

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