

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF BIDDULPH TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 13 OCTOBER 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 Harper
Councillor Jackson
Councillor Perkin
Councillor Redfern
Councillor Rogers
Councillor Salt
Councillor Sheldon
Councillor Smith
Councillor Swift
Councillor Yates

PCSO Steve Sherratt (Staffordshire Police) and Councillor Keith Flunder (Staffordshire County Council) were also in attendance; Councillor Lawson had sent his apologies.

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

30. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

To receive verbal or written representations from:

- Staffordshire Police

PCSO Steve Sherratt updated members that anti-social behaviour (ASB) was down by 6%. There was an online 'surgery' the following evening for people to raise any issues that concerned them. PCSO Pete Johnson is leaving Staffordshire Police.

Councillor Rogers wondered how the Police would deal with people not doing what they should be in relation to Covid. PCSO Sherratt responded that enforcement options were available; that week the Police had reacted to intelligence that there would be a house party in the Biddulph East ward.

Councillor Yates welcomed PCSO Sherratt back to Biddulph. Councillor Yates wondered whether the Police were aware of Facebook reports of young people causing damage at Station Road, and being on the roof of the Victoria Centre. There seemed to be a prevalence of ASB in this area. In addition, there seemed to be a number of young people cruising round the town on bikes; this is potentially intimidating.

Councillor Davies cautioned that he had received an email from the Home Office, which was a scam.

- Staffordshire County Council representative(s)

Councillor Flunder confirmed that he would continue to send email updates from the County Council in relation to Covid actions.

Councillor Flunder was continuing to work on improving access to services.

Councillor Flunder had attended his Divisional Highway Programme (DHP) meeting; there had been positive comments about the Town Council taking over County grass cutting in the town. Improvements of South View are classed as a capital programme, which is on the list. The County Council would be able to access additional funds for drainage and general up-keep.

Councillor Flunder noted that the Conway Road green project would be progressed; parking around this area had been identified as an issue by the Town Council. Warning signs would be added to the Park Lane mini-roundabout. In addition, trees on Conway Road would be considered.

Councillor Flunder wondered whether a Working Group might be the best way to progress these issues.

Councillor Flunder would send some information round to Councillors about flooding.

Councillor Flunder informed members that the High Sheriff wanted to visit Biddulph to thank volunteers; this would also be an opportunity to promote a new funding package that would be available to groups in Biddulph. Councillor Flunder stated that the funding would maintain or improve community services.

Councillor Yates noted that Tunstall Road and Newpool Road were both experiencing flooding. Tunstall Road floods required investigation of the infrastructure.

Councillor Salt was concerned about the speed of traffic on Park Lane.

Councillor Harper noted that the road appeared to be subsiding on Fold Lane again; could Councillor Flunder seek an update from Councillor Lawson? Councillor Flunder would do this.

31. APOLOGIES

Apologies and reasons for absence were approved from:

Councillor Adams
Councillor Hawley
Councillor McLoughlin

32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a) To declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests & Dispensations: Councillor Hall reiterated the interests he had declared within the Planning Committee meeting.
- b) To declare any Other Disclosable Interests: Councillor Sheldon in anything relating to Biddulph in Bloom; Councillor Hall is Vice Chair of the Moorlands Partnership Board.

33. MINUTES

a) The Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 8 September 2020 were **approved**. (Minutes to be **signed** when restrictions on social distancing have been relaxed)

b) The Minutes of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee meeting held on 22 September 2020 were **approved**. (Minutes to be **signed** when restrictions on social distancing have been relaxed)

Please note revised recommendation in relation to IT provision, based on recent information.

The revised recommendation was noted and **approved**.

c) The Notes from the Asset Transfer Working Group meeting held on 10 September 2020 were **approved**.

d) The Minutes of the Recreation and Amenities Committee held on 8 September 2020 were **received**.

Councillor Hall left the meeting.

e) The Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 15 September 2020 were **received**.

Councillor Hall returned to the meeting.

f) The Minutes of the Town and Community Committee held on 15 September 2020 were **received**.

34. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor was wearing the newly refurbished Mayoral Chain. Councillor admired this; the Mayor confirmed that it looked impressive.

The Mayor felt it was a shame that he couldn't do many Mayoral engagements at present.

35. ITEM REQUESTED BY COUNCILLOR JONES TO APPROVE THAT THE TOWN COUNCIL PAYS FOR THE ENTIRETY OF THE TOWN CRIER'S NEW REGALIA, RATHER THAN HALF THE COST (£4086.18)

It was agreed to move this item until the end of the meeting as the discussion involved payment in relation to an individual.

36. STANDING AGENDA ITEM- COVID RESPONSE UPDATE

The Chief Officer updated members that there were a range of risk assessments in place; these are reviewed regularly, as there are changes in guidance. These documents are available to Councillors, if required. The Town Hall is a Covid- secure building.

The reception would be open in the Town Hall when the new team had received sufficient training; the safe interaction between staff and customers was a fundamental consideration.

Decisions about the cancellation of events in previous weeks seemed to have been sensible, given recent numbers of positive cases in Staffordshire Moorlands. A significant amount of PPE had been purchased to ensure that future interactions could be managed safely.

The Chief Officer made reference to comments on social media about the use of the Bus Hub. This is currently closed because social distancing can not be managed in this area; the Town Council do not have the capacity to undertake enhanced cleaning. The future use of this building was being discussed in other committees.

Councillor Salt queried whether Covid grant funding had been received from Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC); Councillor Salt had chased this. The Chief Officer wouldn't know this until the October bank statement had been received.

Councillor Yates asked about a handrail in the reception area. The Chief Officer noted that a 'to do' list was being developed.

37. STANDING AGENDA ITEM- TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE MANAGEMENT OF BIDDULPH TOWN HALL

The Chief Officer updated members that two new Customer Support Assistants had started in the previous week; they were working well together.

Partners had been contacted to discuss providing services/ signposting in the Town Hall, including DWP, the County Council, Citizens Advice, etc. It had been the Town Council's ambition that a

customer approaching the Town Hall could be helped with a range of issues; these links were being developed.

Flu clinics in the Town Hall had been very successful; congratulations to the two GP practises.

Everyone Health were also using the Town Hall for health checks.

Oasis Community Church had also started to meet at the Town Hall.

The Chief Officer noted that all these groups had to put in place very comprehensive risk assessments; Town Council Officers were supporting them with that. This would continue to generate some income.

Councillor Rogers noted that there had been a lot of positive feedback about flu clinics.

38. TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF A FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION OFFICER, FOLLOWING A COMPREHENSIVE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

The Chief Officer thanked Councillors Hall and Jackson for their support in the recruitment process; a number of candidates could have been successful. The chosen candidate had a wealth of experience and would be an asset to the team.

The Chief Officer was seeking Councillor approval to make a formal offer of employment, on receipt of satisfactory references.

Councillor Jackson thanked the Chief Officer for a very professionally run recruitment process. The Mayor reiterated these thanks, and added that the asset transfer work had been very successful in frustrating circumstances.

Councillor Hart added his thanks.

The Mayor proposed that the appointment of a Finance and Administration Officer should be approved; this was agreed.

39. LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME

To **resolve** that the following posts will be eligible to join the Staffordshire Local Government Pension Scheme, in addition to current posts:

- Senior Commissionaire
- Commissionaire
- Finance and Administration Officer
- Customer Support Assistant

Individuals in these roles will be eligible to join the Scheme from the commencement of their employment with Biddulph Town Council.

Proposed by Councillor Hart, seconded by Councillor Jones and **approved**.

40. TO APPROVE THE PURCHASE OF LAND FROM SAINSBURY'S ON STATION ROAD (SALE DOCUMENTS ATTACHED). THE TERMS OF THE CONTRACT ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- Price -£4000 plus VAT
- To pay the sellers legal fees up to a maximum of £5000 plus VAT

- If you sell ALL the property to a third party during the period of 5 years from completion than you will have to pay 50% of any increase (this is referred to as "overage" – please the worked example in the contract)
- During the 5-year period you cannot transfer a PART of the property
- The seller has agreed that you can transfer the property within 5 years to a local authority, borough council, county council, town council or parish council without paying an overage, however if you do, that authority will have to sign up to the same overage for the period when they buy to the end of the 5th year
- The overage will be registered against the Property to notify any third parties. However, at the end of the 5th year you can apply to the seller to remove the restriction registered against the property

Councillor Davies reminded members that the Town Council had been chasing this land for a number of years; when he had been Mayor, he wrote to the Chief Executive Officer at Sainsbury's several times. The Chief Officer had had to battle hard for this. Approval of this would make the rest of the land more viable.

Councillor Jackson was glad that this process was moving towards a conclusion; the Town Council would now need to plan the next steps.

Councillor Harper queried the last bullet point; would there be an additional cost to the Town Council. The Chief Officer speculated that there may well be further expenditure, but she was unsure.

It was proposed by Councillor Hart that the Town Council should move forward with this project; seconded by Councillor Jones and agreed. Councillors Redfern and Garvey abstained from this decision.

41. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE PROPOSALS FOR REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

The Chief Officer noted that the Mayor, Town Crier, Police, Royal British Legion and Council Officers had met to discuss Remembrance Sunday. The Biddulph Methodist Church had also provided valuable input.

The solution appeared to be that 60+ wreaths would be laid by Town Council Officers on 8 November. These should be returned by Friday 6 November.

The priority was to keep people safe.

On 8 November, there would be no road closure and no parade. Only the Town Council and the Royal British Legion wreaths would be laid at a very short service at the cenotaph. The Police had

advised against an outside church service; discussions were still ongoing about a civic church service.

This was a disappointing message.

Councillor Rogers wondered whether this would be publicised. The Mayor noted that no one should be encouraged not to attend.

Councillor Salt noted that there was a social media campaign encouraging people to stand on their doorsteps at 11am.

Councillor Garvey wondered whether there would be any formal communication of this message. The Chief Officer noted that this would be done after Councillors had agreed to these suggestions. The Chief Officer also noted that consideration had been given to filming this occasion.

The Chief Officer reminded members that poppies would be sold from the Town Hall as Sainsbury's had not approved this activity this year.

Councillor Yates raised a proposal from a member of the public about laying wreaths on the steps. The Chief Officer noted that this proposal had been considered; the Police felt that this would attract people.

Councillor Jones proposed this approach should be approved, seconded by Councillor Garvey and agreed.

It was agreed that the soldier and nurse silhouettes would be displayed in the Council Chamber windows. Councillor Salt also wondered whether Councillor Flunder could provide some support with lasers and lights.

42. TO APPROVE AN ADDITIONAL INSURANCE PAYMENT TO COVER THE CONTENTS INSURANCE AT THE TOWN HALL, BUS HUB AND VISITOR CENTRE (POLICY DOCUMENTS ATTACHED)

Councillor Jones wondered whether three quotes had been received; the Chief Officer noted that this was an addition to the existing policy. Quotations would be sought at the end of the policy term.

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

43. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM ALDI AND TO APPROVE ANY FURTHER ACTIONS

The Chief Officer noted that no response had been received from Aldi in relation to the proposal that the Town Council take on a lease for additional land to enable bus access onto the site.

The Chief Officer reiterated that this had been chased and that the Town Council is not holding up the planning applications; this will be determined by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

(SMDC) who are working through a range of issues. The Mayor restated that the Town Council as keen to make this happen.

Councillor Jackson queried whether the Town Council had heard from the County. The Chief Officer noted that the County had agreed this in principle for a peppercorn rent.

Councillor Rogers stated that this should be right, not 'quite right'.

44. ACCOUNTS & FINANCE

- a) To approve accounts and Finance for October 2020

To note that the **Howdens** figure approved in September was £556.72, rather than £617.66

Expenditure above £5000

RGS

Second half of grounds maintenance contract- burial grounds 7100.00

Expenditure above £500 and below £5000

CJ Skelhorne Jewellers

Improvements to Mayor's chain 3223.03

RGS

Lengthsman work (August- October) 1670.00

John Robinson

Reimbursement for Town Crier Regalia 4086.18
(subject to approval of previous agenda item)

Earth Anchors

Noticeboard for Halls Road- contribution to be received from Moorlands Partnership Board
1156.80

MC Cleaning

Cleaning at Wharf Road toilets and Visitor Centre toilets
2444.05

RGS

Supply and fit of membrane and chippings (10 tonne) at Garden of Remembrance
2,390.00

Expenditure below £500**Survey Monkey**

Annual Fee
408.00

Countrywide Grounds Maintenance

Springfield Road
61.40

SLCC

Website Accessibility Training
156.00

SMDC

Lease at Congleton Road
90.00

SPCA

Explore Chairmanship Skills Training
50.00

SPCA

Budgets and Precepts Training
25.00

SPCA

Be a Better Councillor Training
50.00

Time Assured

Service of three clocks
420.00

Grenke

Quarterly fee for photocopier
439.67

Cleaning and Hygiene Distributors Ltd

Cleaning products
316.55

Lymer Doors

Service of Bus Hub door
144.00

Business Products

Photocopies
11.88

Brian Carter

Expenses at Woodhouse Burial Ground
40.00

Artisan Market

Stall erector expenses
180.00

Katelyn Ball

Expenses at Wharf Road toilets (5 weeks)	100.00
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Myers and Co

Employment law advice (October)	150.00
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Credit Card

Royal Mail- stamps	65.00
Giff Gaff- phones, wifi	23.00
ETI- Legionella probe	191.40
NALC- Planning, Leaders Talk	38.93
Shutterstock	19.00
Linings and Hoses- Sanitising System	236.40
Myers and co (August/ September employment law advice)	300.00
Amazon- Leafblower and rivet gun	199.08

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

Mark Edwards (mileage)	4.05
Fifteen (wifi and mobile phones)	102.00
Ash Waste (Town Burial Ground)	373.14
Charlton's Solicitors (fees for Town Hall, bus hub and toilet block leases)	12,043
Invoice and letter are attached were emailed to Councillors for information	
Npower (Christmas Lights) 62.57 replacing cheque 7204	
Sarah Haydon (handles for kitchen, radar keys, torch)	23.81
Petty Cash	45.69
Tidysite	23.10
Salaries	9132.15
HMRC	2717.08
Pensions	1999.05
Subject to approval of agenda item:	
Zurich	226.70

Councillors were asked to note that there will be an additional payment to D&G (93 Bus) in line with the contract.

In addition, there will be a salary payment to Susan Booth when her P45 is received.

The Chief Officer drew attention to the invoice that had been received from Charlton's Solicitors in relation to recent asset transfers; the expectation was that this would be significant. The Chief

Officer noted that the Town Council should be aware in future that if our solicitors have to re-write the documents that come from other parties, the cost of doing this is borne by the Town Council.

Councillor Harper had a number of queries:

RGS would be in receipt of a number of cheques; there was a discussion about current contractual obligations. The Chief Officer asked for separate invoices from RGS to ensure there was transparency.

Would Moorlands Partnership reimburse the Town Council for the noticeboard at Halls Road? the Chief Officer confirmed that it was necessary for the Town Council to claim this money back, as set out in the grant conditions.

The Moorlands Contract Cleaning invoice seemed like a lot of money; this should be looked at again. The Chief Officer noted that this had been approved by Town Council. This is cheaper than employing someone for 365 days a year, 4.5 hours a day. This helps the Town Council meet its contractual obligations.

Councillor Jones noted that this was cheaper than what had previously been paid by SMDC.

There was a query about Covid-requirements in relation to toilets. The Chief Officer noted that there were checks, risk assessments and products that helped to keep the public safe; operating hours were also shorter.

There was discussion about the role of Time Assured, and the Chief Officer reminded members that the contract for an annual service had been agreed by Town Council. Any additional work would be costed separately.

Councillor Jackson noted that the item in relation to the Town Crier's regalia could not be approved until the item had been considered.

CONFIDENTIAL

In accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, s1, the Council is to determine which items, if any, should be taken with the public excluded

35. ITEM REQUESTED BY COUNCILLOR JONES TO APPROVE THAT THE TOWN COUNCIL PAYS FOR THE ENTIRETY OF THE TOWN CRIER'S NEW REGALIA, RATHER THAN HALF THE COST (£4086.18)

It was agreed that the Town Council would pay the entire cost of the regalia.

The meeting closed at 7.37pm.

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