

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 15 OCTOBER 2019

PRESENT

- The Mayor - Councillor Davies
- Councillor Barlow
- Councillor Brady
- Councillor McLoughlin
- Councillor Perkin
- Councillor Rogers
- Councillor Rushton
- Councillor Smith
- Councillor Swift
- Councillor Yates

49.APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from

- The Deputy Mayor – Councillor Jones
- Councillor Redfern

50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- i. Disclosable Pecuniary Interests & Dispensations: None.
- ii. Other Interests: None.

51. MINUTES

- a. The Minutes of the Town and Community Committee meeting held on Tuesday 24 September 2019 were **signed** as an accurate record.
- b. The Notes from the meeting of the Environment and Climate Change Working Group meeting held on 9 July 2019 were **received**.
- c. The Notes from the meeting of the Christmas Lights Working Group meeting held on 12 September 2019 were **received**. Councillor Rushton had sent apologies.
- d. The Notes from the VE/VJ Day and Cenotaph Working Group meeting held on 5 September and 3 October 2019 were **received**.

52. TO RECEIVE THE LIST OF SUGGESTIONS IDENTIFIED AT THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE PUBLIC MEETING HELD ON 26 SEPTEMBER 2019 AND TO DECIDE HOW TO PROGRESS THESE IDEAS

Councillor Smith would like to hold another meeting.

Councillor Perkin noted that lots of suggestions had been made; members should focus on the most achievable.

Councillor Smith suggested tagging the meeting to the end of the November Town and Community Committee (TCC).

Councillor Perkin wondered if this would be too late for members of the public to attend.

Councillor Davies was not sure that the next meeting should be open to the public; comments from the public have been collected and should be taken forward for discussion.

Councillor Hawley thought the committee should look at the deliverables and form a plan for Biddulph and how it would be implemented, then involve the community. If not, the group could become a 'talking shop'.

Councillor Yates agreed; each level of government had certain aspects it could achieve. Town Councillors should define the remit for the Working Group and not be shy of ambition.

Councillor Smith noted that there was a great wealth of knowledge in Biddulph e.g. Dr Senn, Angie Turner; we should consider the public interest.

Councillor Perkin felt that having the public to help carry the workload was vital.

Councillor Rogers added that at a recent meeting of the Parish Assembly Councillor Joe Porter (Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC) Portfolio holder for Climate Change) had delivered a presentation about the work of the District Council Group; Councillor Rogers thought it might be worthwhile feeding into this Group. It was noted that Councillor Yates was a member of that Climate Change Sub-Committee.

Councillor Rogers noted that grants were available to help with projects.

The Chief Officer stated that the Woodland Trust was holding a nationwide event on 30 November 2019 to plant trees. A member of the public had made

contact and would like to hold a mindfulness tree planting event in Biddulph; she had been directed to the District Council for support. It was noted that the date coincided with the Biddulph Christmas Lights switch-on event.

Councillor McLoughlin proposed that the Working Group meets following the November meeting of the TCC to go through the 6 topics. This was agreed.

53. STATION ROAD UPDATE (STANDING AGENDA ITEM)

The Chief Officer reported that she would meet with the architect/project manager and a prospective artist for the proposed memorial to scope ideas. The artist had previously created the Clematis sculpture for Biddulph in Bloom; he was based in North Staffordshire and had worked with PM Training.

The Chief Officer reported that amendments would be made to the roof of the electricity cabinet to deter climbing. Applications had been made for water and power connections.

The Chief Officer noted that maintenance of the site going forwards might fit in with ongoing discussion for grass-cutting, which was being considered at the Finance Strategy and Management Committee. In the interim, she suggested that the Lengthsman could keep the area tidy.

Councillor Hart asked if Legionella testing had been put in place. The Chief Officer was in conversation with caretaking staff at the Town Hall; she reminded members that we were in discussion with the District Council about taking on some of the staff; the current caretakers were skilled in carrying out the relevant tests.

Councillor Smith asked if there was enough left in the budget to cover any issues. The Chief Officer responded that there was a provisional sum in the budget for the mining memorial; she had not been made aware of any budgetary issues by the project manager (bp Architecture).

Councillor Rogers added that the Town Council 'regeneration pot' could be considered, if needed.

54. TO CONSIDER THE INSTALLATION OF A 'HAPPY TO CHAT' BENCH, ITEM REQUESTED BY COUNCILLOR YATES

Councillor Yates had seen a 'chatty bench' whilst on holiday at the seaside. He reported that loneliness was a serious condition.

The Chief Officer noted that this Council currently designates a chatty bench equivalent on Artisan Market days; it could be done on other days too.

Councillor Yates wondered if the area at the side of the Town Hall would be a good place to install a chatty bench.

Councillor Smith thought it was a good idea to have a designated space; she suggested laminating a sign, attaching it to a bench at the front of the town hall and noting what happens.

Councillor Hart thought this was an extension of what this Council did with the 93 bus, to alleviate social isolation.

Councillor Swift was Chairman of the Biddulph Bowling Club, where there were twelve benches around the green; each could hold 6 people. Many conversations were started on these benches; we as individuals should be doing the same.

Councillor Smith wondered if this could be done in conjunction with the Blue Iris project; a person would pin the Blue Iris onto their coat to show they were approachable. She felt this would work well if promoted by the Town Council.

Councillor Rogers proposed that a sign is attached to one of the benches at the front of the Town Hall, which could be monitored by Town Council Officers.

Councillor Hawley thought it was a good idea, but sometimes people don't want to talk.

Councillor Barlow thought a bench would be perfect in the side garden, but it would need signage on the pavement, or no one would go in.

Councillor Yates noted that this would be an interim step to prove its value.

Councillor Davies felt it should be a more robust sign which would last longer; the green area at the front of the Town Hall might be a better place to site a bench as it would encourage people to use the area.

Councillor Rogers noted that there used to be a bench in the side garden, but it had been used for the wrong reasons.

Councillor McLoughlin suggested that we attach a sign on a bench at the front and monitor it; this was proposed by Councillor Davies, seconded by Councillor Smith and agreed.

55. TO CONSIDER THE FUTURE OF THE DEMENTIA CARE AND MENTAL HEALTH WORKING GROUP

It was proposed by Councillor Davies and seconded by Councillor Rushton to bring the group back into the TCC.

Councillor Smith would prefer this as she could not attend day time meetings.

This was agreed.

56. TO CONSIDER THE PROVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING

The Chief Officer was investigating training options for staff; Councillors would be welcome. Costs were in the region of £300 per person for a two-day course, the nearest one was in Stockport. It may be possible to commission a training event at the Town Hall. Councillors Perkin, Smith and McLoughlin expressed interest.

Councillor Yates thought December would be a good time for a training event as there are no meetings, so there would be spare time.

Councillor Hart mentioned that there was now 24/7 emergency provision for mental health at Harplands. Councillors may have the opportunity to visit to see how it works and to consider future provision. Councillor Hart would find contact information for referrals.

Councillor Rogers needed to know more information to recognise the signs and symptoms; an overview would be helpful.

The Chief Officer would investigate training, those wishing to take part should contact the Chief Officer.

Councillor Smith noted that Councillors were trusted members of the community who people came to, it was important that they had the appropriate knowledge.

Councillor Hawley felt that Councillors should recommend that people go and see someone who could help.

Councillor Hart did not want to advise people incorrectly.

Councillor Yates noted that the District Council ran courses on safeguarding so we should contact the District Council for suggestions.

Councillor Swift felt this was a very difficult subject; a little knowledge was a dangerous thing.

Councillor Smith added that the training would focus on how to be sensitive to issues, listen and signpost to the correct place.

57. TO NOTE THAT THE BIDDULPH TOWN CRIER HAS BEEN IN THIS ROLE FOR 25 YEARS, AND TO CONSIDER A 'THANK YOU' GIFT

A number of suggestions were considered: a fob watch, a megaphone.

Councillor Hart suggested something silver, appropriate for 25 years of service.

Councillor Swift remembered that he had been Mayor at John's 20th anniversary.

Councillor Smith suggested something to wear, or something to attach to the regalia; to show off at competitions.

Councillor Yates suggested a silver Town Crier figure brooch.

Councillor Davies suggested a commemorative plaque and something to wear on the regalia.

Councillor Rogers added that the Town Crier's benefit to the town was tremendous. He travelled all over the country advertising Biddulph.

The Chief Officer and Councillor Davies would work together for a suitable memento, the price at the discretion of the Mayor.

It was agreed that this would be done forthwith, proposed by Councillor Perkin and seconded by Councillor Rogers.

58. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON A PROPOSAL TO MONITOR FOOTFALL ON THE HIGH STREET

The Chief Officer was conscious that this issue is on the 2019-20 action plan, and wished to make Councillors aware of progress. The Chief Officer gave a brief overview of the work of Springboard, who worked in many market towns monitoring footfall, including towns locally. The Chief Officer and Events and Partnerships Officer had met with a representative and been given a brief demonstration of how it might work in Biddulph over a 3 or 5 year period.

The Springboard representative had noted that they worked all over the country, except in the SMDC area, so there was no information about who used the three town centres. The Chief Officer had forwarded the information to Officers at the District Council; if a system was installed throughout the Moorlands the costs would be reduced. This system would show how people make use of the public realm area in front of the Town Hall, to aide decision-making regarding future investment.

Councillors Perkin and Swift made apologies and left the meeting at this point.

Councillor Rogers felt this system would mainly help the traders; he would like the Biddulph Business Chamber (BBC) to be back up and running to work with this Council again. This Council tried to help the shops; they should work with us.

Councillor Davies thought this would prove to be very useful information and would take the town forward.

Councillor Smith noted that she was currently the Treasurer of the BBC; the Chair had left the area, but was the second signatory on the account. Councillor Smith would like to restart the BBC and would like this as an agenda item in November.

Councillor Hart felt that people should stop buying from the internet as it was killing the High Street.

The Chief Officer would carry out more research into the work of Springboard and bring more detailed information back to this Committee. She hoped to receive a positive response from the District Council.

59. TO CONSIDER THE IMPACT OF FUNDING PROVIDED FOR YOUTH ACTIVITIES AND AN UPDATE ON CURRENT ACTIONS

The Chief Officer reported that in January 2019 this Council had given £3000 as a contribution to provide the town with two detached youth workers, via the Biddulph Youth and Community Zone. The youth workers were currently working with 40+ young people at each session held on Friday evenings at the Zone. Antony Capostagno had provided a report of the achievements to-date. The workers were building up trust and directing young people between 13-18 years old to the appropriate support and offering diversionary activities at the Zone. Staffordshire Police noted that there had been a positive impact on the young people in the town centre; the full impact would be assessed at the end of 12-month period.

The Young People’s Working Group was investigating the possibility of a shelter for young people to lure them away from the Sainsbury’s car park – a lit and space place. A questionnaire was to be circulated at the High School asking students what they would like.

Councillor Rogers wondered if the unused bus hub could be used, once it was under Town Council control; he felt it would require adult supervision.

Councillor Smith felt that young people would be put off using the building if it was supervised.

The Chief Officer would add this item to an agenda in the future, adding that at the next meeting this Committee would need to consider the budget for projects going forward.

The meeting closed at 8pm.

Signed Date