

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RECREATION AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2019

PRESENT

- The Mayor - Councillor Davies
- The Deputy Mayor - Councillor Jones
- Councillor Baddeley
- Councillor Barlow
- Councillor Brady
- Councillor Garvey
- Councillor Hall
- Councillor Hart
- Councillor Jackson
- Councillor Rogers
- Councillor Salt
- Councillor Sheldon
- Councillor Yates

Other Attendees:

- Councillor Hawley
- Councillor McLoughlin
- Councillor Rushton

Councillor Jones asked when it had been decided to alter the table layout for this Committee. Councillor Hall noted that it was an administrative decision.

The Chief Officer reported that she had asked for this arrangement of tables, as there were fewer members than at Town Council and this was a more informal layout, as with other Committees.

Councillor Jones preferred it the way it was before; there were no other comments.

32.19 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence and reasons accepted were received from Councillor Harper.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a) To declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests & Dispensations:
Councillor Sheldon anything pertaining to Biddulph in Bloom.
Councillor Hart Local Plan residential site specifics in Biddulph.
- b) To declare any Other Disclosable Interests:
Minute 35, Councillor Hart noted that part of the footpath to the tunnel ran through his land.
Minute 38, Councillor Hall lived in Mow Lane adjacent to the brook.

34. MINUTES

- i. The minutes of the Recreation and Amenities Committee meeting held on 8 October 2019 were **approved and signed**.
Councillor Garvey noted that this Committee had agreed to investigate the town centre highways issues identified previously. The Chief Officer confirmed that these would be added to a future agenda when there was more information to share. #
- ii. The minutes of the 93 Bus Working Group meeting held on 11 October 2019 were **received**.

35. TO NOTE CURRENT (TABLED) BUDGETS FOR THIS COMMITTEE AND TO CONSIDER LIKELY PROJECTS FOR 2020/21

The Chief Officer noted that when the budget headings were set, this Council had been using the old committee system; this would be changed for the following years accounts. The Chief Officer asked if members would like any additional projects taking forwards.

Councillor Hawley asked for a list of the current burial ground charges for the next meeting.

Councillor Rogers wondered whether laser hire should be incorporated into the next budget. The Chief Officer noted that Christmas projects would usually go to the Town and Communities Committee for consideration.

Councillor Hart suggested that members take away the paper for further consideration.

Councillor Salt felt that the Biddulph Valley Way Friends Group should have a budget. The Chief Officer noted that this was not a Council Committee, but as such, they could apply for a grant.

Councillor Salt asked if there had been any progress on the blocked tunnel off Woodhouse Lane. The Chief Officer responded that she had lost the battle to keep the tunnel as a footpath; restoration of this area could be revisited if grants were available.

Councillor Jackson asked if there would be a budget for the Slater Street land, if the deal went ahead. This could be considered.

36. LENGTHSMAN

Standing agenda item- New jobs for the Lengthsman

Councillor Yates asked if Footpath 23 had been cleared, the Chief Officer responded that it had.

Councillor Sheldon asked if occasionally the entrance from Congleton by the bridge could be strimmed.

Councillor Yates asked about the piece of land at the corner of Meadows Way and Tunstall Road; Councillor Sheldon noted that the land belonged to James Bateman Middle School.

37. TO DISCUSS ISSUES RAISED AT THE ALLOTMENTS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON 7 NOVEMBER 2019

The Chief Officer tabled the attached note:

Report on suggestions raised at Allotment Holders Annual General Meeting (Thursday 7 November 2019)

No.	Issue identified	Proposed action
1	Moorland Road- rats/ mice and pigeons	CO to query whether SMDC pest control can help
2	Moorland Road- hedges are a problem (SMDC land surrounding site)	CO to query with SMDC maintenance of hedges
3	Moorland Road- fencing appears to be moving on two plots, footings possibly need attention	CO to visit site to establish land ownership
4	Park Lane (also applicable to Moorland Road)- can a permanent sign be erected which has name of site, BTC logo and 'Garden Town of Staffordshire' brand.	CO to query with R&A Committee
5	Long discussion about fires on plots	CO to seek advice from Fire Service. CO to develop general guidelines and add to the rules.
6	Park Lane- revisit potential storage area at the Springfield Road end of the site.	CO to organise site visit for those that would like to visit. R&A Committee to consider investment in new fencing and consider appropriate budget.
7	Park Lane- trees surrounding site (Morris Homes area) are a problem. Roots are causing problems and trees are blocking light. Can plot holders remove the tallest and most invasive species?	CO to arrange site visit with Morris Homes- what is their intention? Discuss with SMDC whether a 'high hedges' complaint can be made. Simon Clayton is also happy to contact Morris Homes.
8	All sites- longer term thought should be given to the water run-off, as part of the sustainability agenda.	
9	Discussion about escalation of plot management, for those not properly cultivated.	CO to develop flowchart highlighting the different management steps on the way to eviction.

Councillor Rogers noted that some allotment holders were not in favour of a sign; they thought it might encourage theft.

Councillor Yates was concerned about the use of pest control on open land, citing the right of life. Councillor Garvey supported Councillor Yates, adding that this was wild ground and they were wildlife.

Councillor Sheldon added that the destruction of crops was an issue.

Councillor Garvey felt that allotment holders should take adequate precautions to protect their crops.

The Chief Officer spoke about the problems of fires on plots; this Council should set out some guidelines to provide clarity. The Chief Officer had asked for guidance from the Fire Service, which would be circulated to plotholders.

Councillor Hawley was sympathetic if a fire was supervised and was out before the plotholder left the site, but was concerned about the responsibility if an accident occurred.

Councillor Rogers was concerned about plotholders bringing items from home to burn.

Councillor Davies used to have an allotment at Brindley Ford; controlled burning was allowed but in an incinerator. This meant that the fire burned quickly and burnt down to nothing, so could be left safely; a controlled method was a good solution.

Councillor Salt asked about risk assessments. The Chief Officer noted that the Town Council had made clear rules and regulations, but needed to strengthen this area. All plotholders were members of the Allotment Society; further feedback would be brought to this Committee.

Councillor Sheldon noted that this matter was brought up at the meeting and discussed fully, the decision made was to investigate further.

Councillor Garvey felt that we should allow controlled closed fires.

Councillor McLoughlin agreed that fires must be enclosed and must be supervised; he would prefer a ban.

Councillor Garvey noted that some diseased growth must be burnt to get rid of it.

Councillor Salt added that guidance on the storage of accelerants on site should be added to the Town Council policies.

With regard to the Morris Homes trees, Councillor Jackson had other complaints about the trees too and would be pleased to be included in the site visit.

Councillor Rushton left the meeting

38. AN UPDATE ON BIDDULPH FLOODING FOLLOWING ENVIRONMENT AGENCY MEETING ON 15 OCTOBER 2019

Councillor Yates gave an update. Four points were raised at the meeting:

- a) The Local Authority highway bridge did not allow run-off back into the channel, it had been blocked when the pavement was raised; the only path for the water was into people's homes.
- b) Downstream of the bridge there was a tree growing which was closing the channel, there was no immediate action needed, except to identify the owner of the land. It was moved that the Town Council would investigate the ownership of the site via Land Registry and then consider the next step.
- c) Maintenance in the channel. The debris which flows towards the bridge will be cleared completely in the Clowes garage area and confluence.
- d) Environment Agency National Flood Management would create channels and 'hedge lay' some of the trees over the top of the channel. When a flood waters rose, they would act as a barrier and pool the water rather than flooding; they would also act as a 'sieve' for the debris.

Councillor Sheldon thanked Councillor Yates for the work and for bringing the information to this Council.

The Chief Officer noted that the Town Council would help to 'manage the message' when the work was taking place.

Councillor Jackson asked if residents were aware that the footpath had been raised. He felt that the homeowners' insurance companies could liaise with the County Council over blame.

Councillor Rogers thanked Councillor Yates; this had been an eye opener, flooding formed an important part of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Councillor Salt thought it was a good piece of work; she proposed that the Chief Officer draws up information to deliver to the local properties and involve the press to explain what was being done. This could be an appropriate feature for the Chronicle.

Councillor McLoughlin had toured the site; he felt that Dorset Drive was only the beginning, waste was coming from other sites along Biddulph Valley, including the Falls Colliery site. This situation would need a bigger scheme than just layering at Dorset Drive; there was also water coming through Biddulph Valley Park feeding into the brook.

Councillor Yates would look at other areas; this was just the first phase. It was an Environment Agency main river, which could be used for a blueprint for other streams.

39. TO CONSIDER WINTER WORK AT THE BURIAL GROUND (PHOTOS TO BE TABLED, AS NECESSARY):

a) Urgent removal of a silver birch tree on the border with the National Trust, and repair of drain below

The Chief officer reported that Biddulph Grange car park has flooded as a result of a blocked drain at the Burial Ground. A silver birch has grown over the drain and the roots have caused the drain to collapse.

Councillor Jackson proposed that costings are sought, and the work is carried out. The Chief Officer noted that Rob Standell is contracted for maintenance work at the burial grounds; a quote for the work has been received.

Councillor Davies proposed that the work is carried out forthwith, this was seconded by Councillor Jackson and agreed.

b) Installation of new membrane and chippings at the Garden of Remembrance

It was agreed to carry out the necessary work, proposed by Councillor Hart seconded by Councillor Garvey and agreed.

c) Management of bushes in Section L

The Chief Officer reported that this work would let in more light, it was proposed by Councillor Davies and seconded by Councillor Garvey that the work is carried out. Agreed.

d) Any issues raised by Councillors

Councillor Jackson asked about the suggestion to enhance the damaged tree in the Bateman Walk, the Chief Officer had contacted an artist and would follow this up.

Councillor Rogers asked about progress on the damaged gates at the Town Burial Ground, the Chief Officer responded that the contractor should be on site imminently; she would make enquiries.

The meeting closed at 9.11 pm.

Signed Date