

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RECREATION AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 14 JANUARY 2020**

### **PRESENT**

- The Mayor - Councillor Davies
- Councillor Baddeley
- Councillor Brady
- Councillor Garvey
- Councillor Hall
- Councillor Hart
- Councillor Jackson
- Councillor Rogers

### **Other Attendees:**

- Councillor Hawley
- Councillor McLoughlin
- Councillor Rushton

### **40.19 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence and reasons accepted were received from:

- Councillor Barlow
- Councillor Harper
- Councillor Salt

### **41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- a) To declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests & Dispensations:  
None.
- b) To declare any Other Disclosable Interests:  
Minute 48 Councillor Hart, his partner may be involved in this project.

### **42. MINUTES**

- i. The minutes of the Recreation and Amenities Committee meeting held on 12 November 2019 were **approved and signed**.
- ii. The minutes of the Allotments AGM held on 7 November 2019 were **approved and signed**.

#### **43. LENGTHSMAN**

Councillor Yates asked if he sponsored signage about dogs at Brown Lees, would the Lengthsman put them up. The Chief Officer confirmed that he would.

Councillor Jones formally thanked Rob and Ray for their work at the Biddulph Moor switch-on which had been far and above what was expected.

Councillor McLoughlin added that the two were also tremendous at the Town switch-on and had done a very, very good job.

Councillor Yates expressed concern about a path from Meadows Way to Station Road which was deteriorating. The Chief Officer and Councillor Hart were invited to visit the site with Councillor Yates.

Councillor Sheldon noted that the path sides had become rotten and the path had washed away, it needed new wood and additional limestone chippings.

#### **44. BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS**

- a) To consider likely projects for 2020/21

The Chief Officer circulated a sheet of proposals for members' thoughts and suggestions.

Councillor Jones clarified that the 93-bus service cost was a little less than the figure presented. The Chief Officer noted that the figure included some advertising costs, if they were necessary.

Councillor Sheldon noted that the Butterfly Garden had natural drainage, the brook ran through it and then under the A527 road; the area had previously been open casted and was naturally wet land.

Councillor Rogers queried the repair of the footpath at Station Road; could the footpaths budget be used.

Councillor Garvey noted that the group that had met briefly to discuss town centre highways issues had identified some projects; the Chief Officer noted that there was a Reserves Policy, with £50,000 Highway development work in earmarked reserves.

Councillor Garvey proposed that this paper is taken to the Finance Committee; this was seconded by Councillor Davies and agreed.

- b) To make recommendations regarding fees and charges for the Burial Ground and Allotment sites (2019-20 figures attached)

The Chief Officer reported that fees had not increased since 2017/18 and suggested a small increase in line with inflation.

Councillor Jackson noted that to keep close to inflation an increase of 5% would be better, adding that our costs were not cheap, this was seconded by Councillor Davies and agreed.

Councillor Hall abstained from the vote as Chair of the Finance, Strategy and Management Committee.

The Chief Officer noted that any surplus at the end of year was put aside for large projects - for example, creating a new Garden of Remembrance; in about twenty years an additional burial ground site would be required.

Councillor Yates felt that the rationale needed clarification for the public.

#### **ALLOTMENT SITES:**

#### **45. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE IN RELATION TO MORRIS HOMES TREES ADJOINING THE PARK LANE ALLOTMENT SITE**

The Chief Officer had received an email from Morris Homes which permitted some of the trees adjoining the allotment site to be removed and a reduction in the height of some of the others. The allotment holders would carry out the work assisted by the Lengthsman; there would be no cost to Morris Homes.

Councillor Sheldon expressed concern that special insurance would be needed to fell a tree, which could be an additional cost to this Council.

Councillor Jackson congratulated the Chief Officer for making contact with a representative of Morris Homes.

Councillor Jones expressed concern about the environmental impact of felling mature trees. The Chief Officer noted that the work carried out was thinning out of overplanted trees and crown lifting on the remaining ones.

#### **BURIAL GROUND ISSUES:**

#### **46.TO CONSIDER A REPLACEMENT BENCH REQUEST AT THE TOWN BURIAL GROUND**

A picture of a recently installed bench was circulated.

The Chief Officer reminded members that this Council had a Bench Policy. In the Burial Grounds the style of bench, installation and maintenance were now the responsibility of the Town Council. Up to five suitable memorial plaques would be attached to a new bench on behalf of those contributing.

The person making the replacement bench request had removed a rotten bench and replaced it with the one pictured; he was not happy about the Bench Policy.

Councillor Davies noted that the new bench went against our Bench Policy and should be removed.

Councillor Garvey supported Councillor Davies adding that it was outside our policy, an unsubstantial fix, not a commercial style; he asked who would be liable for damage or injury. Councillor Garvey noted that allowing this bench would be setting a precedent, we had a Bench Policy.

Councillor Jones concurred, he asked if the bench was in memory of someone, the Chief Officer responded that the original bench had been.

Councillor Hawley noted that the bench was not sturdy; this one could not be allowed.

Councillor Sheldon asked if the bench had been installed by the same family; if so, we should offer a plaque on our bench.

Councillor Jones suggested giving a deadline to the family to remove the bench.

Councillor Jackson noted that this bench was completely different to the previous one and was not in line with our policy

It was proposed by Councillor Garvey, seconded by Councillor Rushton to refuse the bench and that it should be removed. This was agreed.

**47. TO NOTE THAT A LIME TREE HAS FALLEN IN THE CHURCH YARD. TO CONSIDER REPAIR WORK AND PREVENTATIVE ACTION WITH REMAINING TWO LIME TREES**

The Chief Officer reported that the remains of the Lime tree had been removed.

Councillor Hawley noted that the tree was in St Lawrence's churchyard. The Chief Officer reminded members that the Town Council was responsible for maintenance and management of St Lawrence's Churchyard.

The Chief Officer had asked the tree survey contractors to check the two remaining large Lime trees, one had a small pocket of decay, but both showed no sign of risk.

The fallen tree had knocked over two old headstones and damaged two others; it was agreed that the priority should be the repair of the newer headstone. The Chief Officer had spoken to the family and provided a reassurance that this would be repaired; the older headstones may be quite costly.

Councillor Davies noted that some older stones in the churchyard had been laid flat, the Chief Officer responded that the family would need to be traced and contacted before any decision was made.

The Chief Officer noted that the fallen tree had recently been classified as low risk. Councillor Davies suggested that the remaining two should be removed to get rid of the problem.

Councillor Yates suggested that heritage plaques could be created; consideration should be given to removing the two remaining trees and replanting on a three for one basis, with more suitable small species.

Councillor Garvey agreed that the trees should be replaced, he questioned whether this was an insurance issue. The Chief Officer noted that this particular work would not be covered.

Councillor Sheldon noted that some seemingly healthy trees had fallen on the Inner Relief Road (Meadows Way), as they had not developed a proper root system. Biddulph in Bloom had permission to replace them.

Councillor Rogers asked when the gates and railings would be repaired. The Chief Officer noted that this work would take place in the spring when the weather was better. The insurance money had been received.

It was agreed that the Chief Officer should go ahead with the above work.

#### **PROJECTS:**

*Councillor Hart left the chamber before discussion took place on the following item. Councillor Garvey took the Chair.*

#### **48. TO CONSIDER FUNDING VETERAN TREE IDENTIFICATION TRAINING (STAFFORDSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST) FOR VOLUNTEERS AT A COST OF £250. THIS WAS A COMMITMENT WITHIN THE TREE CHARTER ANNIVERSARY AND WOULD ENHANCE MAPPING DATA.**

The Chief Officer gave a brief explanation of the proposal. There were gaps in the knowledge of veteran trees within the town, people were keen to know how to map the trees. In November 2018, Biddulph Town Council had committed to identifying veteran trees in its area. Staffordshire Wildlife Trust would train volunteers including Biddulph Ramblers to increase skills within the town. The training would be over a full day.

Councillor Jones would like to attend.

Councillor Davies added that members of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group were also interested.

Councillor Sheldon noted that most veteran trees could be found in public open spaces, field boundaries and private land, especially in the Brown Lees area.

The Chief Officer noted that the course would include identification of trees, survey methods and how to map them.

Councillor Hawley noted that the course was run by very enthusiastic and professional people, he asked if we should publicise the event. The Chief Officer thought it should be open to members of Biddulph Ramblers and those interested Neighbourhood Plan Working Group members, then offer it out if there was space.

It was proposed by Councillor Jones and seconded by Councillor Davies to fund veteran tree identification training by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust for volunteers at a cost of £250. This was agreed.

Councillor Hawley asked how many sessions would be funded. The Chief Officer responded that we would initially fund one and see how we got on.

The Chief Officer noted that the best time to run the course was summer when the trees were in full leaf. A date would be agreed and if all the spaces were not taken up it would be advertised more widely.

Councillor Sheldon asked if the training would be a lecture or a site visit. The Chief Officer responded that it would be an element of both.

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm.

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