

MINUTES OF THE RECREATION AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2021

PRESENT

- Deputy Mayor - Councillor Garvey
- Councillor Rogers
- Councillor Hall
- Councillor Baddeley
- Councillor Hart
- Councillor Lawton
- Councillor Jones
- Councillor Brady
- Councillor Jackson
- Councillor Smith
- Councillor Yates
- Councillor Salt

30. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received for Councillor Sheldon and Councillor Harper.

31. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Disclosable pecuniary interests and dispensations: None declared.

Other interests: None declared.

32. MINUTES

- a) The Minutes of the Recreation and Amenities Committee meeting held on 12 October 2021 were approved and signed.

Moved by Councillor Jones; seconded by Councillor Garvey. All approved.

33. PETITION FEEDBACK – LASK EDGE

The Chief Officer outlined that the petition raises concerns regarding the road markings at the crossroads of Lask Edge Road, Blackwood Road and Crowborough Road. There are 140 signatures on the document submitted.

Councillor Jones said that he supports the aim of the petition and is surprised that the work had not been done already. Councillor Jackson and Councillor Yates echoed the same sentiments.

Councillor Salt said she supports the petition and suggested that a response is formulated, but wanted to ensure if the petition met the criteria specified in the Petitions Policy.

The Chief Officer confirmed that full addresses were not received, which is required by the Petitions Policy, but the petition was received before the Petitions Policy was approved.

Councillor Jones felt it didn't need to be a petition for the Town Council to consider the issue.

Councillor Garvey requested that the Chief Officer write to Staffordshire County Council Highways team to offer the support of the Town Council to this issue; Councillor Yates seconded, all voted in favour.

34. AMBULANCE PROVISION

The Chief Officer outlined that information had been received as a result of the Freedom of Information request to West Midlands Ambulance Service. The data had been analysed and showed that response time targets had not been met in 2020/21 and that ambulance performance in Biddulph had deteriorated year on year.

Councillor Jones said that data demonstrates the category 1 response times had been elongated, putting lives at risk. He was also aware of a recent 8 hour wait time for an ambulance. He was concerned about strains on the ambulance service, but felt Biddulph is receiving a deteriorating service as resources are centralised. Data also suggested that a rapid response vehicle would have been a more efficient way of treating approximately half the patients.

Councillor Jones suggested that the person who supported the analysis of the data be invited in to speak to a number of Councillors to support the formulation of a response. Councillor Hall seconded, all voted in favour.

Councillor Jackson said that he was concerned at the 2 minute increase in ambulance wait times since 2017, as in an emergency such time is vital. He expressed frustration with the issues within different sections of the NHS, contributing to delays.

Councillor Rogers said he felt that First Responders could make a real difference, though Councillor Jones said that a volunteer service should not be relied on.

Councillor Salt said that any letter sent should be copied to Mrs Cox, who is a governor of West Midlands Ambulance Service and a resident of Biddulph. The Member of Parliament (MP) had written to the Chronicle to say she has no power over the decision of West Midlands Ambulance Service. Community First Responders no longer continue in Biddulph because of issues with constraints with medication supplies. Councillor Salt was concerned that previously Councillors raising concerns regarding ambulance provision have been accused of scaremongering.

Councillor Yates noted that Biddulph would not have access to a network of response posts due to its location on the periphery of the borough and the hub locations.

Councillor Smith said that she has called an ambulance for a family member on three occasions when they were suffering a stroke and had an average response time of over 2 hours.

Councillor McLoughlin spoke of the restrictions that had been placed on First Responders and the reduction in ambulance provision, and how this can impact on the residents. The issue is particularly pronounced given Biddulph's location closer to the Cheshire Hospitals than the resources utilised by West Midlands Ambulance Services. He said that he was also concerned the MP had said that she cannot impact the provision.

Councillor Lawton said that he was aware of an elderly resident who needed an ambulance being told that he would not get an ambulance for 6 hours and was advised to get driven to the hospital. Councillor Lawton said he was concerned that relatives asked to drive in this situation will be distressed and untrained, potentially leading to more accidents.

Councillor Garvey said that the data presents a very poor picture of the service in Biddulph, but felt the case would be enhanced by comparison to the ST1 postcode - as had been suggested in the response. He proposed that this information be requested; Councillor Salt seconded. All voted in favour.

Councillor Jones said data from 2018 should also be requested to compare with when Biddulph had a rapid response vehicle (RRV). Councillor Jones said that he had not received a positive response from either Mrs Cox or the local MP. He said that the ambulance service are only part of the problem, but the withdrawal of provision is worsening the service.

35. BURIAL ISSUES

a) To consider an approve the attached Burial Policy

A Burial Ground Management Policy has been distributed and amalgamates pre-existing policies relating burials in to one document. This will be considered again in January for formal approval. Councillor Salt asked if Tree Memorials can be included in the Policy.

b) To receive a verbal update in relation to a review of reserved graves

The Chief Officer said that a full review of reserved graves in section J had been completed. There are a few spaces in that area that can be allocated, as appropriate.

Councillor Jackson asked about the rate of usage of the Woodhouse Burial Ground and how long it will take for sections of the Burial Ground to fill up. Further information would be available in the New Year.

c) To receive preliminary findings in relation to a zonal risk assessment of memorial safety

The Chief Officer briefed Councillors on the main points of the Zonal Risk Assessment. Woodhouse Burial Ground is considered low risk, but there are a number of concerns in the Churchyard and Town Burial Ground side, where memorial fixings are older. The report makes a number of recommendations regarding further safety testing of some of the memorials.

Councillor Yates asked what jurisdiction the Churchyard memorials fall under. He asked whether funding may be available to provide some assistance in maintaining memorials of local significance and where there is no living relative.

The Chief Officer outlined that there is a lack of detail in the Church maintenance agreement, so this needs to be further investigated. However, there may be some funding available as Moorlands Partnership Board had previously looked at restoration projects in this area.

Councillor Jones moved, Councillor Garvey seconded for the Chief Officer to get a quote for further risk assessment of the Churchyard. All in favour.

36. TO CONSIDER THE BUDGET FOR 2021-22 INCLUDING A CONSIDERATION OF SPEND TO-DATE AND FUTURE PROJECTS

The Chief Officer provided a breakdown of expenditure to date. There are no concerning deviations from the budget. In the coming year, there is likely to be

expenditure on maintaining the Bateman Walk, Memorial Testing and retendered the Burial Ground Maintenance contract.

Councillor Salt asked for the expenditure on acquiring Shepherd Street to be considered.

Councillor Jones proposed, Councillor Garvey seconded to consider the priorities so far in the budget- setting process. All in favour.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

37. TO CONSIDER OPPORTUNITIES TO ACQUIRE LAND WITHIN THE TOWN

Opportunities were discussed and it was agreed that land opportunities may be added as a standing agenda item.

The meeting closed at 8.02pm.

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