

MINUTES OF THE TOWN AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 16 NOVEMBER 2021

PRESENT

- Deputy Mayor - Councillor Garvey
- Councillor Davies
- Councillor Harper
- Councillor Jackson
- Councillor Jones
- Councillor McLoughlin
- Councillor Perkin
- Councillor Rogers
- Councillor Salt
- Councillor Sheldon
- Councillor Yates

Jackie Nevill gave an update on the work of the Twinning Committee. The Committee started in 1987, and schools have been involved since that date. However, Jackie would like to see more adults involved in Twinning activities, and to raise awareness and funds for the Twin Town initiative.

Councillor Rogers said that he had a very positive experience when visiting Fusignano, but found the fundraising issue difficult, especially considering how much Fusignano funded when Biddulph representatives visited. Jackie said that she is aware of this issue and looking in to this.

Councillor Jones suggested that a grant application could be put in by the Twinning Committee to the Town Council, and is also aware that John Robinson, the Town Crier has been involved in a number of events to raise money. Councillor Jones suggested the Mayor be a member of the Twinning Committee.

Councillor Davies said that he had been involved in hosting a representative from Fusignano.

Councillor Harper queried the cost to bringing representatives from Fusignano over; Jackie noted that this tends to be in the region of £1500, but also relies

on generosity of hosts and local businesses. He too suggested applying for a Town Council grant.

Councillor Salt said she would be happy to be a 'friend of the Twinning Committee' and would be involved in activities.

Councillor Jackson said he recalled a football match with Fusignano representatives and a trade fair. At that time, European Union (EU) funding had been available, but with the UK having left the EU, he wondered how this impacted on Twinning.

Councillor Sheldon said that previously individual children had stayed with families, but now they stay in their own separate accommodation; she felt this had weakened the close links between Biddulph and Fusignano residents.

The Chief Officer said that the Town Council is able to offer exhibition areas or event space that may help the Twinning Committee.

Councillor Rogers suggested an open evening with food to raise awareness.

Councillor Salt suggested investigating the use of the Town Hall as a sleepover space.

Councillor Garvey thanked Jackie for attending and offered support. He suggested Jackie returns to the January meeting with costed options for the Committee to consider.

31. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Smith.

32. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Disclosable pecuniary interests and dispensations: Councillor Sheldon declared an interest in any matter pertaining to Biddulph in Bloom.

Other interests: None declared.

33. MINUTES

- a) The Minutes of the Town and Community Committee meeting held on 19 October 2021 were signed.

Moved by Councillor Jones, seconded by Councillor Perkin. All in favour.

- b) The Notes of the Young People's Working Group meeting held on 21 October 2021 were received.

Moved by Councillor Garvey, seconded by Councillor Harper. All in favour.

- c) The Notes of the Civic Events Working Group meeting held on 1 November 2021 were received.

Moved by Councillor Garvey, seconded by Councillor McLoughlin. All in favour.

- d) The Notes of the Christmas Events Working Group meeting held on 1 November were received.

Moved by Councillor McLoughlin, seconded by Councillor Jones. All in favour.

- e) The Notes of the Environment and Climate Change Group meeting held on 4 November 2021 were received.

Moved by Councillor Yates, seconded by Councillor Garvey. All in favour.

34. TO RECEIVE A VERBAL UPDATE ON WELCOME BACK FUNDING

The Chief Officer said that invoices will be submitted for the temporary lights on the trees on the front of the Town Hall, signage and publication, entertainment for the Christmas Lights switch-on event, and window painting at the Town Hall.

Councillor Jones asked if some of the funding can be used for entertainment at the Biddulph Moor Christmas Lights event.

Councillor Jackson asked if Biddulph Town Council would be able to benefit from any of the funding that is available through a District Council scheme, which expires on 31 March 2021. The Chief Officer said that there has been additional funding under the 'additional restriction funding' which is available for new activities. She suggested that a garden and food festival, display of local art, support for small holders and reinstating ethical fairs could all be good opportunities for new events. Councillor Jackson asked if there could be an event for young people also.

Councillor Yates suggested doing a similar scheme as last year of giving out Christmas lights and chocolate packs to local residents, perhaps along with information that advertises Town Council services. He also requested some solar lights at the 'Gillow Heath Gateway' (the tree at the end of the car park at Smokie's Way). It was noted that Welcome Back funding is designed for temporary town centre enhancements. Councillor Jones said that tea may be a preferred option to deliver for the pack for residents.

Councillor Salt queried whether it would be possible to establish a loyalty scheme for local shops with prizes from local business also. It was agreed to

look into this further for January's meeting and perhaps associate it with Valentine's Day.

All Councillors agreed to approve the principle of an additional High Street event and further research will be undertaken in the meantime.

35. TO RECEIVE A VERBAL UPDATE ON CHRISTMAS EVENTS

The Chief Officer updated Members that all is in progress for 27 November and 4 December events for the respective Christmas Lights switch-ons. Two 18ft Christmas Trees have been ordered. However, new government guidance was issued on 9 November which advises to restrict the length and amount of gatherings. This means that tables and chairs should no longer be provided in a marquee for the Christmas lights events, and also 'bundling' and 'singing' are considered high risk. Therefore the Children's event on 11 December has had to be cancelled, particularly as if there was any spike in Covid infections, this would require people to isolate over Christmas.

Councillor Jackson said he felt it was important to communicate the reasons why the events may not run as usual.

Councillor Salt asked if a list of jobs that are needed for the switch-ons could be sent round so that Councillors are able to help.

Councillor Yates requested a summary of events to be circulated to Councillors.

36. TO RE-VISIT THE DECISION TO REVIVE THE BUSINESS CHAMBER AND TO AGREE NEXT STEPS (ITEM REQUESTED BY COUNCILLOR SMITH)

Councillor Yates wondered if Welcome Back funding could be used to support a 'launch event' for the Business Chamber.

Councillor Rogers said he does have some frustrations about the lack of support from local traders.

Councillor Salt said that businesses not on the High Street, such as those in the business parks should be included.

Councillors agreed to support any effort to reform the Business Chamber.

Moved by Councillor Jones and seconded by Councillor Perkin. All in favour.

37. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON PROJECTS TO BE UNDERTAKEN BY THE BIDDULPH COMMUNITY OFFICER (SUPPORT STAFFORDSHIRE) INCLUDING A PROPOSED TAXI SCHEME

The Community Support Officer has been working with businesses in the town and officers at the Council to promote community groups and encourage businesses to support community groups. There is a volunteer board in reception at the Town Hall. This is also being advertised via the Chronicle.

To support people to access community groups, the Community Support Officer is looking to offer a taxi scheme, which part-funds taxi transport for travel to such groups; funding opportunities are still being researched.

Councillor Rogers said he supported the taxi idea, providing it utilises Biddulph taxi companies.

Councillor Davies asked if Biddulph Volunteer Drivers already offer this kind of service. He said that this does not preclude the taxi scheme.

Councillor Jackson said that the Community Support Officer provided some very useful information at the Biddulph Youth and Community Zone recently, and wondered if she could do a presentation to the Town Council.

Councillor Sheldon noted some of the difficulties in managing significant numbers of volunteers.

It was agreed to invite the Community Support Officer to the Town and Community Committee in January.

38. TO RECEIVE THE PETITION IN RELATION TO THE RELOCATION OF THE MINING WHEEL AND TO AGREE APPROPRIATE ACTIONS

The Chief Officer noted that the petition had been received at Town Council and had been referred to the Town and Community Committee. There were a 1143 signatures, of which a maximum of 374 could be from Biddulph. Over 700 signatures were from outside Biddulph.

Councillor Jones moved to receive the petition and agree appropriate action.

Councillor Jackson said that it may be beneficial for some of the numbers to be made public, but he is wary of reigniting more emotion or starting another petition.

Councillor Jones said he felt that it should be sent back to the Working Group for further consideration.

Councillor Perkin said that the specific points raised need to be considered, not a new solution automatically considered.

Councillor Sheldon asked how the Town Council would consider the concerns addressed directly to the Town Council.

Councillor Salt said she felt the Working Group needs to be widened, given that there are a number of different suggestions that have come about in the public response to the mining wheel being moved. She felt that the scope of the Working Group needs to be considered before referring the issue to the Working Group. Councillor Salt suggested that the Working Group cover both the front of the Town Hall and Station Road development.

Councillor Jackson said it should be noted on the website that the petition has been received and give the results of the analysis. He said that he felt that the design provided is the best design but thinks that the frontage of the Town Hall could be a good location for the miner's memorial. He said that his priority is to ensure that a miner's memorial is in place, but is not concerned about the location.

Councillor Sheldon said that it is difficult to plan the use of Station Road until the road is made part of the area.

Councillor Garvey said that the first task of the Working Group should be to consider whether valid points were raised in the petition that warrant the revisiting of the decision regarding the mining wheel.

Councillor Jones moved, Councillor Garvey seconded. All in favour.

It was agreed to put the numerical analysis of the petition on the website and state that the issue has been referred to the Working Group. Councillor Garvey moved, Councillor Perkin seconded, all in favour.

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

The Chief Officer summarised the budget performance to-date for the Committee. She requested that Councillors consider projects for next year in order to guide future budgeting.

Councillor Salt said that she was concerned that plans to improve the area round the cenotaph haven't been followed up. She said she would like to see budgets in place to support this. Councillor Perkin moved and Councillor Jones seconded to revisit the landscape around Albert.

Councillor Yates was concerned that the future budget does not increase significantly.

Councillor Harper asked about the maintenance of the war memorial at St Lawrence's Church. The Chief Officer said that her understanding is that the Church currently maintains that memorial.

Councillors agreed that the Chief Officer would make enquiries with St Lawrence's with regard to the maintenance of the memorial at St Lawrence's Church.

Councillor Sheldon said Moorlands Partnership Board had given grants to very old graves and monuments of historical interest, including graves St Lawrence's Churchyard. The grant supports repair, not any changes.

Councillor Jackson suggested design work may be needed for a new Garden of Remembrance. It was confirmed that this is being considered for the Recreations and Amenities Committee.

The meeting closed at 8.33pm.

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