

MINUTES OF THE CIVIC COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 9 JANUARY 2007

PRESENT

Chair: Councillor Hall, the Mayor, Councillors Baddeley, J Harrison, K Harrison, Hart, Jones, Meredith and Rogers

Also in attendance: Councillor Gibson, Mr Barry Holland (SPCA Training Officer)

Members of the Committee wished to pass on their sympathy and good wishes to Councillor Booth and family, following the recent death of Mr Chris Booth.

60.06 APOLOGIES

Received from the Deputy Mayor, Councillors Booth and Jackson.

61. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations.

62. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2006 were signed as a true and correct record.

63. QUALITY COUNCIL STATUS

The Chairman welcomed Mr Holland to the meeting, to discuss the Town Council's forthcoming application for Quality Council status. Mr Holland said that the aim of Quality Status was to show what you achieve on a day to day basis. The idea is to show that the Council has community involvement and many councils fall short on this (in proving that they are dealing with their community and that the community is informed and involved). The new Government White Paper shows a strong movement towards the promotion of Quality Status councils, talking about them becoming more responsible for their own destinies, as in the old urban/rural council days. Mr Holland's position is funded for a two-year period by DEFRA and, this year, a further £26,000 has been obtained for revenue projects for Quality Status councils that attain the status by August 2007. The target is to get this Council's portfolio before the County Accreditation Panel well before this date. Mr Holland's target is to get 18 Quality Status councils in Staffordshire – there are 11 at present. He is talking to other funding bodies to ensure that the programme continues and spoke of the lack of younger people becoming involved with local councils. This programme should involve younger people – schools should also be involved. Very few people actually know what goes on in a town like Biddulph. He spoke of the importance of supporting evidence to show what the Council does to involve and inform and said that he would guide us through the application process.

The Chair asked about the timescale and could we make the April Panel meeting? Mr Holland felt that this was feasible as three newsletters will have been produced by then. Members listed areas that proof of community involvement could be evidenced – committee meetings (especially Civic, Tourism), Biddulph in Bloom, Christmas lights, twinning, community safety, calendars, postcards, festival, town guides, Area Action Plan. The Chair asked whether larger councils would receive enhanced powers over smaller ones. Mr Holland confirmed this.

It was moved that the portfolio would be submitted by the end of March for the April Panel and that a Quality Status working group would meet each Monday morning at 10 am, from 22 January.

Mr Holland was thanked for his attendance and input.

64. TWINNING ANNIVERSARY

Councillor Meredith asked for the support of the Town Council for the 20th Anniversary of the town twinning with Fusignano and gave a brief account of the history of the twinning. He hoped that the Town Council would do something special this year in commemoration. This was Moved and Councillor Meredith will bring some firm proposals from the next meeting of the Twinning Association.

65. REGENERATION

Councillor Hart said that the retail park planning application had been temporarily withdrawn due to a design problem. There was still a tremendous amount of interest in the site. Ratification of the AAP was expected later this month.

There had still been no improvement work carried out in the High Street, but this was scheduled to start in the next 14 days. It was moved to contact the County Council to ask why small squares of tarmac had appeared in King Street and to complain about the general quality of work. Also, large vehicles are still parking on the paved area by the Co-op, between the bollards. It was moved to also complain about this.

The poor appearance of the gateway from the car park was discussed and it was moved to ask the Executive to raise this at the next meeting.

66. CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

The Administrator is to meet with the contractor to debrief and asked for feedback from members.

The Meeting closed at 6.35 pm.

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