

## **MINUTES OF THE CIVIC COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 4 DECEMBER 2007**

### **PRESENT**

The Mayor, The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Hall (Chair), Councillors Betts, Davies, Gibson, J Harrison, K Harrison, Harper, Hart, Shaw, Sheldon, Walley and Harris; Mrs Brown, Mrs Corbishley, Mrs Filer, Mr J Robinson and Divisional Officer Moore

### **50.07 APOLOGIES**

Councillors Baddeley, Mrs Humphreys, Sgt Evans, Rotarian Deaville, Mr F Warwick, Rev'd A Dawswell

### **51. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Hart declared an interest in Minute 56.07, discussion of the Town Centre Co-ordinator budget, as District Council Portfolio Holder for Regeneration.

### **52. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2007 were signed.

### **53. REGENERATION**

- a) Mrs Filer, Market Towns Officer, thanked members for the opportunity to address the meeting. She had last attended in 2005 to speak about applying for a grant from the regional development agency, AWM, for the Promoting Biddulph project to raise the profile of the town and to encourage visitors. The project consisted of four sections - formulating a brand, promotional materials, supporting events and Town Centre Co-ordinator funding for related activities. £50,000 had been secured from Advantage West Midlands in 2007. Mrs Filer spoke of achievements to date: the Festival and Events and Exploring the Countryside leaflets; a regional gardens brochure; Festival programmes for 2006 & 2007; an image bank; supporting two events (Gilding the Lily and the Town Criers Championship); the 2007 and 2008 calendars; the design and installation of a small tourist information point at Biddulph Grange Garden and jute shopping bags are currently in production.

Problems had arisen in that it took longer to develop all of the above than anticipated and AWM has recently undertaken a review of all Market Towns projects, with an embargo on the approval of any new projects until the conclusion of the review. This has affected the Groundwork Interpretation Trail – as funding for signs was coming from this pot. As this may not go ahead, at this time, the Regeneration team was reconsidering how the remaining money could be spent and would like to explore this with this committee and the Town Council. One idea was to develop welcome signs re-enforcing the Garden Town branding and the north, south, east & west approaches to the town and Mrs Filer asked for members' views on this concept. This would involve removing the Gateway to the Moorlands signs, which had been a Town Council project, but the branding was conflicting.

Councillor Rogers liked the new Congleton Borough signs and would like to see similar here, to include the Garden Town branding. Councillor Sheldon said that the existing signs were still in good condition and that it is important to ensure that the site under the sign is in a tidy condition. Highway verges are not usually mown as frequently as required. Many of Biddulph's communities would like signs and designs had been drawn up some time ago. Councillor Harris said that the project had not gone ahead due to the high cost of each sign. It would probably be possible to incorporate the Garden Town logo onto these signs. Councillor Sheldon said that she

had a project in mind which incorporated the six laser-cut area signs on a scroll as backdrop to a landscaping scheme on land at the Wharf Road gateway into the town. Mrs Brown said that these images were on the Biddulph website.

It was agreed that the budget should be spent before the end of March on a signage project and to develop these ideas further and Councillor Sheldon and Mrs Filer agreed to meet to look into this in more detail before the next meeting.

Other possible projects could be the promotion of the re-development work in a visual way, although it was anticipated that the developers would be doing this themselves. Mrs Sheldon remarked that the town centre needs additional trees – much work has been done recently on the need for shade in town centres in summer months. Councillor Rogers thanked Mrs Filer for the assistance and support that had been given to the Tourism sub-committee during this project's lifetime.

The Chair thanked Mrs Filer for attending the meeting.

- b) The Administrator reported that there had been good news from the County Council that funding had been obtained to upgrade the northern end of the High Street in line with the southern part, and to include a tree feature, with the work starting in late January. Councillor Hart added that there would be an unavoidable three month road closure from 21 January until the end of March, but that the Town Centre Co-ordinator and Mr Mason from County Highways would be liaising with businesses.

#### **54. CHRISTMAS SWITCH ON EVENT**

The Chair congratulated everyone who had contributed towards the event. Letters of heartfelt thanks would go out in the near future – it was considered to be the best yet. A snagging list was drawn up, which would be helpful next year.

Councillor Shaw reported on the Biddulph Moor Switch on, which was very well attended. The Community Group would be sending out thanks to all who helped – it was becoming a real community event. This had been the fifth year and there had been no issues. Councillor Shaw paid tribute to the Police and the First Responders.

Re the town centre event, Divisional Officer Moore reported that all went well from a police perspective, although the buses seemed a bit lost at first. There was a much bigger crowd in attendance than previous years and the police were very grateful for the refreshments. Mr Robinson felt that the events at the town hall should be better co-ordinated, with a strict timetable. He offered to co-ordinate this. The Mayor said that it had been a fantastic event and that it had been good to see so many councillors in attendance. She gave special thanks to Councillor Rogers, who had worked especially hard to ensure that everything ran smoothly.

Councillor Rogers said that the contractor had done an excellent job and had done additional work for no charge. Councillor Shaw added that the work at Biddulph Moor was also very good and moved that a letter of thanks be sent. Councillor Harris had received favourable comments regarding the lights and said how lovely the crib and town hall lights looked. There was a lovely atmosphere and it was also good to see the town's car parks full.

Councillor Rogers added that the Business Chamber had put a massive amount of work into this event, ensuring its huge success. Mrs Corbishley said that even the street entertainers had commented on the fact that all of the retailers had joined in, with many wearing Victorian costume. Councillor Hart commented that the team effort had really paid off.

#### **55. BIDDULPH BUSINESS CHAMBER**

Mrs Corbishley said that the Chamber was about to order stationery and that the Committee wished to ask if the town hall address could be used to avoid having new letterheads printed each time the committee members changed. The Administrator said that the Town Centre Co-ordinator's in-tray could be shared by the Chamber. This request was approved.

**56. BUDGET 2008/9**

A copy of the 2007 budget and the amounts spent to the end of November was circulated for members.

Councillor Shaw said that in the light of the last meeting of the Town Council, the Town Centre Co-ordinator's budget may need to be increased. Mrs Corbishley asked if there would be enough in next year's budget to include Christmas lights for the Kingsfield Road shops and Well Street. Councillor Rogers said that there was some spare festoon cable under the stage.

The Chair proposed an inflationary increase of 3%, as there were no new projects in the pipeline, plus the Town Centre Co-ordinator addition. This was seconded by the Mayor and all were in favour.

**57. CLOSING REMARKS**

The Chair thanked members for their help and co-operation over the last few months with the regeneration of the town.

Re Minute 53 b); Councillor Hart asked that members did not pre-empt the work of officers getting information out to business regarding the road closures.

The Chair reminded members that the business of this committee depended upon the Town Council ratifying the Minutes at its next meeting.

The meeting closed at 6.25pm

Signed .....

Date