

MINUTES OF THE CIVIC COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 5 DECEMBER 2006

PRESENT

Chair: Councillor Hall, the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Councillors Booth, J Harrison, K Harrison, Hart, Meredith and Rogers

Also in attendance: Councillor Gibson and Mr Harris

52.06 APOLOGIES

Received from Councillors Baddeley, Jackson, Jones, Mr Robinson.

53. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Rogers declared a personal interest in Minute 58.06: his wife had been an employee of Somerfield Stores.

54. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2006 were signed as a true and correct record.

55. CHRISTMAS LIGHTS SWITCH ON/CHRISTMAS MARKET

The Chair said that there had been two letters of complaint received from traders regarding the fair's catering stands and also that there had not been any events at the two extremities of the High Street. However, it had generally been a very successful event and most people were very happy. The Deputy Mayor had also received several letters of complaint. Councillor Gibson was invited to address the meeting, as Acting Chair of Biddulph Chamber of Trade and Commerce. He had also received complaints from local shop keepers but said that the Town Council should make it clear to them that the lights are for the community. The Chair said that the event does bring a large number of people into the town centre, so there could be opportunities for traders. The Mayor added that the traders are individual businesses and that it is their choice whether to open or not, however, could this Committee invite representatives to the lights meeting next year? This was felt to be a useful idea. Also, there are other fairs available. Councillor Gibson added that the traders have now realised that they will miss the Town Centre Co-ordinator and the regular information they received through him. Some are in a very fragile position.

Mr Harris was invited to speak: he was in favour of ringing the changes with the clear lights; he was disappointed about the letters as he had tried hard to include everyone in the arrangements for the market and had offered to do publicity (which was not taken up); he felt that the placement of rides could be improved upon; the market stall holders had been very pleased with the even – some had sold out – and was pleased to have 20 stalls, as there was a lot of competition near to Christmas.

The Administrator and Mr Harris had drawn up a list of suggestions for next year (herewith) and it was moved to approve these. It was also move to write to the traders with these comments and to ask for suggestions. The Administrator reported that a risk assessment had been carried out, in conjunction with the police, on highway safety for the event. An emergency access had been retained at all times and it had been necessary to make additional public safety arrangements in Station Road on the Saturday evening, as the Victoria Centre had also held a concert. It was recommended that the Town Council purchase road closure equipment for next year as the hire charges have increased considerably.

It was moved to investigate separating the lights/tree contract for next year and to invite tenders from local electricians to decorate the two trees. Councillor Rogers informed the meeting that colour-changing lamps are now available and that these could be mixed in with the clear ones for best effect.

Mr Harris was thanked for all of his hard work in making the market so successful – the Chair said that it had been an excellent event, despite the weather. It was moved to write to thank

all who helped with the event. The Deputy Mayor reported that the refreshments for volunteers/police etc had been very successful and she thanked those who had generously given their time.

It was moved to purchase a holder for the Town Crier's bell, as he had difficulty managing this and his walking stick.

56. QUALITY COUNCIL

a) Public Speaking at meetings of the Town Council

It was moved to recommend that there will be a twenty minute section at the beginning of each meeting of the Town Council. Three minutes will be allocated to each speaker (who must be a registered elector or hold business interests in the town) and notification must be given to the Town Administrator, in writing, by noon on the preceding Wednesday to allow questions to be circulated with the agenda. The above to be publicised in the Reporter, Messenger and on the Town Council website.

b) Acceptable Reasons for Apologies

The following were recommended: ill health; family illness; bereavement; work; holiday; Council business; Mayoral/Deputy engagements.

57. REGENERATION

Councillor Hart reported on a recent meeting held with representatives of the bus companies to discuss the objections to a one-day road closure for the market. The meeting had not gone well as the companies were not prepared to be flexible, saying that this would mean an additional journey of 4km and that would possibly result in part of the town being missed off the route (Biddulph Moor or Braddock's Hey). It may be possible to look at the northern end of High Street for the market, but there are health and safety implications due to the narrowness of the street. It was felt that the bus companies made their decisions purely on a business footing and that service was of secondary consideration. Members felt that once the retail park is developed the bus co's may have to change their stance. It was moved to write to the companies to express the disappointment of the Town Council.

58. GILLOW HEATH TRAFFIC ASSESSMENT

It was moved to write to the County Council to request that this be carried out as soon as possible.

59. TWINNING ANNIVERSARY

Suggestions were received from the Twinning Association regarding possible events/celebrations for the 20th Anniversary in 2007. It was moved to accept these in principle, and to follow up at the next meeting.

The Meeting closed at 6.57 pm.

..... Signed Date

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS DEBRIEF

Suggestions for 2007:

- **Signs to say what is on offer on stalls/shops**
- **Fairground rides at both southern & northern ends of High Street**
- **Written contract for fairground with plan of exact positioning of rides/stalls**

- **Two stall booking forms ('Bring a Friend') to be sent out in August**
- **Lighting in middle and front of stalls**
- **Consider purchasing our own barriers/signs**
- **Refreshments in Hall for public to purchase**
- **Complaints from traders re food stalls – how to deal with this? – not have fair? – say fair cannot bring food outlets?**
- **Treasure hunt for children**