

MINUTES OF THE CIVIC COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 9 AUGUST 2007

PRESENT

The Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, Councillors Baddeley, Davies, Gibson, Hall, J Harrison, K Harrison, Hart, Shaw, Sheldon and Walley.

Also in attendance: Councillor Harris

20. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Rogers declared a personal interest in Minute 26.07, as his wife is an employee of a town centre store that will be affected by the AAP.

Councillor Hart declared a personal interest in Minute 26.07 as Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and member of the Regeneration Executive.

Councillor Davies declared a personal interest in Minute 23.07 as an member St Lawrence's Church.

22. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2007 were signed as a true and correct record.

23. GATES & RAILINGS AT ST LAWRENCE'S CHURCH

Councillor Sheldon had requested this item. She had been thinking about the town's artefacts for a long time and was concerned that many of them had fallen into disrepair and were likely to be lost forever. The gates and railings were not listed, although the Church and archways were, but they may be in the future. They were cast iron and had been made by Robert Heath's craftsmen. The District Council's Conservation Officer had been out to see the railings and was in favour of restoration as there was not much of Heaths' work left in Biddulph. He was concerned that the gates had been removed. The railings were not in unredeemable condition, although they would require considerable restoration. There are craftsmen in the area who would be able to carry out this type of work.

It was moved to write to the Vicar to ask for permission for the Town Council to seek funding for restoration work to be carried out.

24. FAIR TRADE TOWN

Councillor Sheldon had circulated information on this to members at the last meeting. The Town Council had approved the principle of becoming a Fair Trade town at the last meeting. It had been moved to form a sub-committee to work on the application and Councillors Harris, Rogers, Sheldon and Walley indicated their willingness to form this sub-committee. It was noted that other interested members of the Council would be very welcome to join them. All were in favour.

25. CHRISTMAS SWITCH ON EVENT

a) The contractor had been informed that his tender was successful. The town lights will be switched on Saturday 24 November and Biddulph Moor on Saturday 1 December. Councillor Gibson informed the meeting that the newly formed Biddulph Business Group was keen to become involved this year and it was moved to invite the Chair to the September meeting, when arrangements for the switch on will be finalised. Councillor Harris was invited to address the meeting. He said that he had

agreed to assist the Business Group to organise a Christmas market on 24 November and will be shadowed by a member of the Group this year, with that member taking on the organisation for the following year. Councillor Harris presented a letter from the Business Group and requested that the Town Council supports the event, as in previous years. It was proposed by Councillor J Harrison and seconded by Councillor Hart that this be accepted in principle and to recommend that the Town Council sponsors the market to a maximum of £500. All were in favour and the proposal was Moved.

b) The lowest cost obtained so far to replace all of the lamps (1,400) with LED lamps was £6,020. The Business Group had expressed an interest in seeking funding amongst its members. It was moved that the Chair, Vice Chair and Administrator look into the costs, replacing as many lamps as possible whilst staying in budget.

26. REGENERATION/TOWN CENTRE

The Administrator had been asked to present a report to the next Executive meeting to detail Town Council regeneration funding and to outline what projects the Town Council would like to see carried forwards with this funding. The total amount in the budget was £160,000. Members discussed this and said that the Town Council had identified the upgrading of lighting columns and street furniture in the shopping area. (ABB Ltd, on behalf of the County Council, is to replace the columns following the completion of Phase 2 highway work, but this would be for standard ones.) It was noted that Mr Mason had said that it was possible to have street lighting from buildings, which would save disturbing new paving.

Councillor Gibson queried the budget and the Administrator will check with the District Council whether there was to be any draw-down of Town Council money for the work already done. Councillor Hart reported that the District Council still had £430,000 in its budget and that the street lighting was part of Phase 2. He was concerned that many residents do not seem to understand the AAP and what the Executive does. We should look at better explanation to the public, when applicable.

Councillor Sheldon proposed that there should be some small projects costed out and ready to go forwards, as MTI funding is extremely difficult to obtain and there is sometimes an opportunity for smaller projects with match funding in place to be put forwards. We should be ready for any opportunity. Councillor Gibson raised the issue of the central gateway project – there had been a huge shock at the very high cost of this, which had made progress impossible. Members felt that this should be looked at again, with a smaller scheme being drawn up, and it was agreed that the Town Council would like to support all three gateways as funding projects.

It was moved that Councillors J Harrison, Hart and Sheldon meet to look at the town centre and identify any suitable projects and that costings for lighting upgrades be obtained for the next meeting.

The Administrator was also instructed to clarify with the Executive how the Town Council's contribution will be called on and to say that members would like to hold some money back for leverage or match funding for future projects.

27. LISTING OF IMPORTANT ITEMS

Councillor Sheldon reported that this related to Minute 23. Quite a lot of important features in the area were in a poor condition and she requested that these be catalogued and photographed, with the condition noted. It would then be possible to apply for grants (MTP/Heritage Lottery) to repair the features. One example was the drinking fountain on Congleton Road, which has been deliberately damaged.

It was moved that this listing be done and members were asked for their input.

28. TWINNING ANNIVERSARY/MOSAIC

Councillor Baddeley said that the visit was a great success and thanked the Town Council for its assistance. The mosaic was greatly admired by all and the visitors were most impressed by all of the flowers throughout the town. The Chair reported that concern had been expressed regarding the possibility of vandalism to the mosaic and that we should investigate a protective covering. Councillor Shaw said that it would cost approximately £120 - £150 for a protective polycarbonate sheet.

It was moved to consult with the artist and the Twinning Association and to have a cover made if it was felt necessary.

The Meeting closed at 7.00 pm.

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