

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON  
TUESDAY 17 OCTOBER 2006

PRESENT

The Deputy Mayor; Councillors Baddeley, Booth, Brown, Deaville, Gibson, Hall, J Harrison, K Harrison, Jackson, Jones, Lovatt, Proudlove, Rogers, and Walley.

Councillors Hart and Meredith were also present.

64. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and reasons accepted from the Mayor and Councillors Adams, C Stone and D Stone and the Town Crier.

65. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hall declared a personal interest in Minute 71, as a member of Biddulph Rotary, leaving the meeting before discussion took place and not returning to the meeting.

Councillor Brown declared a personal interest in Minute 71 as a member of Biddulph Methodist Church, leaving the meeting before discussion took place and returning after.

Councillor Jackson declared a personal interest in Minute 76f as a relative of the bicycle retailer.

66. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2006 were approved and signed.

67. RETAIL PARK

This application had been previously welcomed by the Town Council planning sub-committee. The Inner Relief Road had now opened up land for industrial and commercial use, but it was important to include good safe pedestrian access to the High Street and to emphasise this gateway into town.

Councillor Gibson voiced his intention to attend Staffordshire Moorlands District Council planning applications committee to speak on behalf of the application and asked for the backing of the Town Council, which was given.

It was agreed that the town centre needed broadening and that the current High Street is not attracting shoppers. It was hoped that the new retail park would contain the types of shops that people want. In addition, the small retail units around the development could lead to their workforce using the town centre shops. Members agreed that the park would need careful integration into the town and that this would be an invaluable way to get a greater volume of people into Biddulph. Public transport links, in addition to pedestrian, need careful consideration at this planning stage. Section 106 money could also bring great benefits to the town – this should be looked into.

68. TOURISM SUB-COMMITTEE

The Minutes of meeting held on 28 September 2006 were received. With reference to Minute 31, it was agreed that the design cost of £150 be paid. Re Minute 33, the Town Criers Championship event had ended with a deficit of £635.15. It was moved to re-imburse the Town Crier with this amount, as agreed in General Purposes Minute 75.05. All were in favour of this.

69. TOWN BURIAL GROUND SUB COMMITTEE

Minutes of meeting held 18 September 2006 were received. Councillor Brown gave a brief report. Ref Minute 20b: the owner of the remaining unsafe memorial in Section A has, at last, agreed to arrange for the repair to be carried out. Ref Minute 21b, Councillor Gibson asked if the driveway surface was dangerous and was told that it was last resurfaced in 1987 and was starting to break up, although it was not considered dangerous.

A quotation of £1400 was received from the maintenance worker for the annual lime tree pruning. It was agreed to accept this.

Steve Massey, District Council tree officer, had given permission for safety work to be carried out to the TPO'd large oak trees. David Hall, tree surgeon, had quoted £380 to carry out this work. This was approved.

#### 70. COUNCILS CONNECT PAYMENTS

This item was requested by Councillors Meredith, Roberts and Hart

As reported in the Biddulph Chronicle and discussed at Cabinet, the District Council proposed to discontinue Council Tax payment facility at Biddulph Councils Connect for the following reasons: to reduce costs, maximise collection and to provide a good service to customers. 3\_ jobs would be lost across the District (Leek, Cheadle and Biddulph).

Town Council members objected to this proposal and it was noted that Biddulph Councils Connect doubles as Police reception all staff are needed and valued. Concern was expressed that the staff had not been informed prior to the report in the local press. In addition, many local people had been expressing their unhappiness with this and saying that it would be unfair to the high percentage that prefer to pay by cash – some cannot pay by direct debit.

Councillor Lovatt proposed that the Town Council writes to the District Council to say that it was appalled by this proposal and to request that this matter is reconsidered, as it goes against plans for regeneration and bringing people into the town centre. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Meredith and all were in favour of the letter being sent.

Councillor Gibson did not vote on this item, to enable him to take part in the discussion at District Council. Councillor Hall left the meeting at this point, declaring a personal interest in the application by Biddulph Rotary.

#### 71. GRANTS

The Sub committee is to meet on Monday 23 October 2006 at 7.00pm to consider the list of additional applications.

Councillor Meredith left the meeting at this point.

#### 72. TOWN CENTRE CO-ORDINATOR VACANCY

Councillor Roberts reported that the position is yet to be advertised. Councillor Hart felt that the District Council had made a conscious decision not to advertise the post to leave a clean break between Mr Harris and his successor. Councillor Gibson commented that the District Council needed time to agree new contracts with two remaining Town Centre Co-ordinators before advertising the post in Biddulph. The worst scenario was that the position could be vacant for 6 months, and that we should decide which events may be jeopardised by this delay. Councillor Rogers expressed concern about the 2007 Biddulph Festival. Councillor Jones proposed that a letter is sent to the District Council requesting that the post is advertised without further delay and that this Council is represented on the interview panel and Management Board. This was Moved.

#### 73. PARISH ELECTIONS 2007

A letter from the Chief Executive and Returning Officer was received, advising that adequate budgetary provision be made for the forthcoming elections, in May 2007.

#### 74. CORRESPONDENCE

- a The Citizen's Advice Bureau Annual Report 2005 – 2006 was received.
- b LSP Partnership Update October received from District Council.
- c Draft East Midlands Regional Plan – copy received from East Midlands Regional Assembly.
- d SPCA Advisory Notes 105 was received.
- e Staffs Moorlands Play and Youth Strategy – an invitation to attend a Focus Group at 11.00am on Thursday 26 October at Moorlands House was received. Any Councillor attending is urged to 'flag up' the Community Theatre project.

#### 75. MATTERS REFERRED FOR ACTION AND AWAITING RESOLUTION

- a Primary Care Trust – nothing further to report
- b County Council/Coalfields Community Campaign. It was agreed to write again forthwith and to point out Charter agreement about replying to queries.

#### 76. REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS ON MEETINGS ATTENDED IN THE MONTH

- a Councillor Gibson reported on the meeting re local councils paying for community policing at Ipstones on 26 September. Chief Superintendent Loxley was present, also Councillors from across the District. All held the same view about double taxation, and the proposal has not been accepted throughout District.
- b Councillors Booth and Rogers attended Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association meeting on 6 October. Mary Booth has now retired, her Deputy has taken on her role as a temporary measure.
- c Councillor Booth attended that Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association AGM on 4 November. Councillor Rogers' term of office has now come to an end. Thought is to be given to his replacement.
- d Councillor Lovatt and Councillor J Harrison attended an Biddulph East Action Day de-brief. Two PCSO's are to be in post by November.
- e Councillor Meredith attended the Moorlands Partnership meeting – two Biddulph projects were included; the alley between Travel Agency and Saffron and to repaint the Cottage Bakehouse.
- f Councillor Lovatt had received a reply from Councillor Dix re the Meadows School (see copy of letter).
- g Councillor Baddeley attended the Neighbourhood Watch and Police Conference at Stone on 14 October. Eight new Community Safety Officers have been appointed. There has been a reduction in crime figures since the introduction of the police bicycles, which are recording 30 miles usage per day.
- h Councillor J Harrison attended the CCTV seminar. He reported that it will be a horrendous cost to renew the equipment, and more cameras are needed in the town. Discussion took place about the possibility of siting a camera on the new industrial estate, which could overlook skatepark. Prohibitive costs seem to determine that the district would not have a separate system, but buy in to Stoke's, one of the finest systems.

The meeting closed at 9.12pm.

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