



## **BIDDULPH PARTNERSHIP EXECUTIVE**

**Notes of Meeting held on 17 January 2008**

	<b>Introductions</b>	The Chair wished all present a happy, prosperous and industrious New Year.	
	<b>Present</b>	<p><b><u>Voting members</u></b>  Cllr Christina Jebb (SCC)  Cllr Madelaine Lovatt (SCC) <i>Vice Chair</i>  Cllr Andrew Hart (SMDC)  Cllr Sybil Ralphs (SMDC)  Cllr Kevin Jackson (BTC) <i>Chairman</i>  Kim Corbishley (Biddulph Business Chamber)  Diane Casewell (Voluntary Sector)  Jill Norman (SMCVS)  Cllr Hilda Sheldon MBE (Biddulph in Bloom)  Rev Dr John Peal (N/Forum)  Sylvia Rushton (BERA)</p> <p><b><u>Officers:</u></b>  Kate Thacker (BTC)  Ian Jackson (SMDC)  Ruth Reeves (SMDC)  Mark Trillo (SMDC)  Michelle Wallace (SMDC)  Ian Young (SMDC)  Andy Mason (SCC)</p> <p><b><u>Also in attendance:</u></b>  Martin Evans (Staffs Wildlife Trust)</p>	
<b>1</b>	<b>Apologies</b>	Charlotte Atkins MP Sarah Humphreys (SMDC) David Murrell (SMDC) Perry Wardle (SMDC) Nigel Yates (Bus/Town Centre Devel Group)	
<b>2</b>	<b>Notes of last meeting</b>	The notes of the last meeting, held on 29 November 2007, were approved.	
<b>3</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	No declarations were received,	
<b>4</b>	<b>Highways Update - Andy Mason</b>	AM reported that the past week and a half had been a bit fraught - with the visits to the frontagers to discuss the road closure. There was genuine concern,	

		<p>but most were quite satisfied and wanted the work to proceed. There had been talk of a petition against closing the road for the period of the works by a small minority (3 or 4 business owners). AH spoke of his disappointment that the officers had had such a hard time with this. SR asked how many businesses were in that stretch of High Street - approx 25. The Chair pointed out that the AAP had been in place for some time and the work was always planned.</p> <p>AM said that a few changes/additions had been made to the scheme and the start date had been put back to 4 February. There were a couple of problems - still no confirmation received from the District Council that the small area of land in South View would be transferred to the County Council. The scheme had to be done in its entirety, so this is crucial. MT informed the meeting that this had been agreed in principle by Cabinet, and would proceed, subject to call-in.</p> <p>AM continued to say that the other problem was finance. The works estimate had come in at £160,000, making a total spend IRO £290,000. £50,000 was promised by the District Council, leaving a £80,000 shortfall as it stood at present. The County Council did not have any additional funding to make up the difference. The Chair said that the Town Council had approx £160,000 in its regeneration budget and asked how much the District Council had left. AH replied that most of the £500,000 was left and the Chair suggested that it would be fair if the Town Council contributed an additional £20,000 and the District Council £60,000. AM said that the re-kerbing, re-paving and beautification works would be in jeopardy if the shortfall was not made up. The County Council had already paid £320,000 towards the scheme, compared to other partners £60,000.</p> <p><i>(ML declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Cross Street.)</i></p> <p>It was agreed that if the extra money was not found it would mean the loss of finishing touches and that the whole scheme would be spoilt. AH commented that there had been a severe lack of highway maintenance to this part of High Street in the run up to this work being carried out and that people would be exceptionally disappointed if it was not done. He spoke of the dangerous condition of some buildings and of the low kerbs. The Chair pointed out that a decision could</p>	
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	<p>not be made on behalf of the town &amp; district councils at this meeting, but that a speedy decision was important. AM suggested putting the start date back by a few weeks and said that some of the frontagers would prefer this. KT pointed out that the Town Council did want its funding to be spent on the built environment and that the next meeting was 19 February. MT said he would take this to Cabinet on 12 February. The Chair spoke of the importance of having the Leader of the District Council and the Portfolio Holder at these meetings. Members were concerned about putting the start date back yet again and AM agreed to go with 4<sup>th</sup> February. All voting members were in favour of this. Regarding the Market, AM reported that he had met with C Filer recently and was informed that the AWM funding was not now available for this project. He asked whether this meant that the project had been cancelled. The Chair replied that it had not and that the decision on the operator would be taken in March. AM said that he could envisage similar problems from business owners to the news of the weekly regular road closure and said that the RTO advert was due to go into the press on 24 January. He had thought that the intention had been to advertise the planning application for the market at the same time, to get all the objections in at one time, but understood that the planning is not far enough along. The Chair said that he felt it was time for the County Council/District Council to start communicating. MT confirmed that the tender for the market operator had been placed and the a feasibility study on using that part of High St had to be carried out, with the intention of having the market in place for April. AWM had withdrawn its half of the £40,000 market funding, so the District Council was left with its £20,000. The Chair and ML expressed concern that this had not been mentioned before and asked why this project had been delayed so much. MW outlined that the slippage had resulted in a six-month delay which meant it was outside the MTP time frame. AWM had allowed the £20k to be re-allocated into the programme's unallocated funding, to be used elsewhere. Members expressed frustration regarding the delays in the programme. <b>It was moved that AM to liaise with the Planning section to publish the market traffic orders at the same time as the planning application and that a timeline report on the delay with the</b></p>	<p>KT MT</p> <p>AM</p>
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		<p>market be produced for the next meeting.  AM was thanked for his input and left the meeting.  CJ gave apologies and left the meeting.</p>	CR
5	<p><b>MTI -  project  Report from  Staffs  Wildlife  Trust</b></p>	<p>MW introduced this by saying that Martin Evans was to bring a report on the site &amp; design consultation outcome and to ask the Executive for approval for Phase II of this project.  <i>HS declared an interest &amp; left the meeting, Biddulph in Bloom having been an original partner in this project.</i>  ME was welcomed to the meeting and reported that the proposed memorial garden site at the town hall had been chosen for the dry stone wall feature and a display of the young peoples' designs had been sited in Councils Connect for a 1 week period. The majority of those responding had been in favour of creating the feature and had selected the circular design. However, the dry stone waller had now withdrawn from the project and ME was looking for a replacement, with no success so far. It seemed unlikely now that the project would go ahead and MW said that the implication was that if the money was not spent by 31 March 08 this funding would be lost from the programme - all contracts must be fulfilled.  If a new contractor was found, they would need to be able to also deliver the training aspect of the project or 2 people would be required. MW reported that £1165 had already been spent on Phase I of this project and that a date was needed by which someone was needed to a) complete the feature and b) carry out the training or a line would have to be drawn under the whole project. The Chair was concerned that AWM may have a poor opinion of the Executive if this should happen. AH responded that there had been compliments from AWM in other areas.  MW asked ME where the training of 8-10 young people would take place? ME replied that the District Council Countryside team had a suitable stretch of dry stone wall for the training exercise and also that a stone bench was to be constructed at the youth centre. The young people working at the town hall would be from the Youth Offending Team. MW also questioned the safety of the training site and if planning permission would be needed. The site was safe and no pp would be needed. A meeting with the youth offending team was to be arranged in the near future. MW said that the profiled funding was to come in, in March, but urged haste. She</p>	ME

		<p>asked the Executive members to approve funding for Phase II, as long as Youth Offending were willing to work on site and a dry stone waller can be found.</p> <p><b>It was moved that if positive results on the following are obtained, then the Executive approve the Phase II funding: a) ME to have to the beginning of February to sort out the issue of contractors for the memorial garden and the youth training; b) ME to seek advice from SWT on whether additional work can be done on the garden; c) MW to make the decision to discontinue the project if the above criteria not met.</b></p> <p>ME apologized to the Executive for the delays with this project.</p>	MW
6	<b>Empty Properties - Ian Young</b>	<p>IY gave a verbal report on the current situation. A confidential list would be emailed to councillors. Nine town centre properties were currently being looked at: one had a grant approved; one had an Empty Dwelling Management Order drafted; one was being CPO'd; two properties were at an early stage of action and 4 were mainly commercial (not as easy to take action against). ML felt that it was unfair that Executive members could not be party to the same information as District Councillors. IY said that the legal advice obtained on this prevented the information being distributed to anyone except District Councillors. JN asked what the way forwards for the commercial properties was. IY responded that they could proceed with CPO's if it fitted in with the AAP. AH pointed out that this was why there was still money in the District Council pot (for CPO's). The Chair commented on the powerlessness of Councils, when people were allowed to let their properties fall into disrepair in this way. ML said that this matter had been on the agenda for the past 4 years.</p>	IY
7	<b>MTI Implemetation Plan - Michelle Wallace</b>	<p>a) Victoria Centre Co-ordinator's Project: the project had been affected by the embargo by AWM but, following the meeting of 3 Jan, MW had contacted the Victoria Centre to see if they still wished to go ahead. They did &amp; also had enough funds to make up the shortfall. They had amended the original application to reflect the new timescales and profiles and a new application</p>	

		<p>was received with the changes marked in red. Would be committing £6459 of revenue fund to this project. <b>All were in favour of approving this revised application and of sending out a contract letter.</b></p> <p>b) Implementation Plan: re page 3 (Performance Review) - new projects had been halted since October whilst a comprehensive review of the whole programme was undertaken. Since the meeting on 3 January the Victoria Centre was given the go ahead; the Biddulph Valley Way Interpretation Trail project was not supported by AWM (did not meet the level of key tasking outputs required). Should AWM be satisfied re delivery of the programme by the end of March 3 projects would be looked at for 08/09: a) funding of professional fees &amp; costs associated with employment site in town centre; b) to provide support for site opportunities for Live-Work developers and c) acquisition &amp; refurbishment of vacant/derelict town centre commercial premises to achieve physical improvements &amp; facilitate re-location of displaced businesses.</p> <p>JN was concerned that ideas for projects had not been invited from the broader Biddulph community. IJ replied that AWM would listen to other project proposals if they would deliver the key economic outputs. DC was concerned that project c) was dependent on legal processes and would probably exceed the time scale. The Chair felt let down that this proposal had only come forwards at this late stage when officers knew 3 years ago that town centre poor quality premises were one of the main concerns of members of the Executive. He went on to criticise the way that AWM had micro-managed the scheme and said that he hoped there would be a frank discussion at the next meeting, at which AWM officers would be present. JN suggested lobbying Sue Prince, a Board member from the Staffs Moorlands, re these concerns. She suggested asking for other projects to come forwards and asked officers to negotiate with AWM to allow capital funding to be transferred to revenue.</p> <p>MW then carried on to outline changes to projects</p>
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		<p>(pages 5 and 6) and spoke of the MTP succession plans. JN asked why the Community Chest was not allowed to carry funding forwards to 08/09, as the Toy Library was. MW replied that this was because the output of 0.5 jobs was included with the Toy Library project.</p> <p><b>The Implementation Plan 2008/2009 was endorsed by members - all were in favour.</b></p>	
8	<b>Other Business</b>	<p>a) The meeting with representatives from Sainsbury's was confirmed for 13 February.</p> <p>b) Better Staffordshire Moorlands Panel - the Chair said that there was a strong call from Biddulph members for the District Council to squash parking charges in Biddulph. When Sainsbury's have 2 hours free car parking there would still be the other car park with charges and so a resultant unfair effect on businesses at the southern end of the town. The Chair asked for the support of the Executive to write to the Portfolio Holder for Planning to make this request as part of the consultation on the District Council's review of its car parking strategy. SR said she totally agreed with this, as part of the consultation process. ML seconded the proposal and all were in favour of a letter being sent to Councillor Ellis. MT pointed out that all fees and charges were reviewed annually, as part of the Council's policy.</p>	RR
11	<b>Date of next meeting</b>	<p>28 February 2008 - at 5.30pm (13 Feb @ 5.30 pm for Sainsbury's meeting)</p> <p>Other dates for 2008: 10 April; 22 May; 3 July; 4 September; 16 October; 27 November</p> <p>The Meeting closed at 8 pm</p>	