

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE MEETING,
BIDDULPH TOWN COUNCIL
TUESDAY 15 FEBRUARY 2022, 6.30PM
HELD AT BIDDULPH TOWN HALL, HIGH STREET, BIDDULPH ST8 6AR**

PRESENT:

- **The Mayor:**
Councillor S Rushton
- **Deputy Mayor:**
Councillor J Garvey
- Councillor J Davies
- Councillor K Harper
- Councillor K H Jackson
- Councillor J T Jones
- Councillor A J McLoughlin
- Councillor C R Perkin
- Councillor W Rogers
- Councillor C M Smith
- Councillor N R Yates

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Mrs Sarah M Haydon – Chief Officer (Minute Taker)
- Ms Jodie Hancock – Events and Partnerships Officer
- Ms Esther Gladstone – Finance and Administration Officer

50. APOLOGIES

Apologies were recorded for:

- Councillor E E Baddeley
- Councillor J P Redfern
- Councillor J Salt
- Councillor H M Sheldon MBE
- Councillor C M Smith
- Councillor G Swift

51. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

- a) **Disclosable pecuniary interests and dispensations:** Councillor Jones declared an interest as a member of the Royal British Legion.
- b) **Other interests:** None declared.

52. MINUTES

The minutes of the Town and Community Committee meeting held on 18 January 2022 were **signed**.

Moved by Councillor Perkin, seconded by Councillor Garvey. All in favour.

The Young People's Working Group Notes from the meeting held on 20 January 2022 were **received**.

Moved by Councillor Garvey, seconded by Councillor Harper. All in favour.

The Civic Events Working Group Notes from the meeting held on 7 February 2022 were **received**.

Moved by Councillor Garvey, seconded by Councillor Jones. All in favour.

The Environment and Climate Change Working Group Notes from the meeting held on 13 January 2022 were **received**.

With a minor amendment, moved by Councillor Harper, moved by Councillor Yates. All in favour.

53. TO RECEIVE A PRESENTATION ON THE ACTIVITY OF THE FAIRTRADE GROUP IN BIDDULPH

Gillian Reynolds introduced Lex, another member of the Fairtrade Town Group; Gillian gave a presentation on Fairtrade. She noted that there are differences between 'fairly traded,' 'fair trade' and 'Fairtrade.'

'Fairtrade' is the only official designation, and involves a small premium that goes directly to the cooperatives who decide democratically how they spend that money. Gillian noted on non-Fairtrade bananas, only a very small percentage goes to the producer and to the workers, where is 39% of the cost goes to retail and VAT.

Biddulph became a Fairtrade town in 2010, though work had been undertaken for at least a year prior to this date. The aim is to make sure that Fairtrade thrives as much as possible.

An annual Fairtrade competition is undertaken with schools, and a whole variety of events and promotional activities are arranged by the Biddulph Fairtrade Town Group.

The lockdowns due to the Covid-19 pandemic have had a significant impact on the Biddulph Fairtrade Town Group, and the group is seeking new members in order to maintain the group.

The Fairtrade Town award is due for resubmission in 2022, having already had a 2-year extension.

Membership enquiries can be directed to Gillian or through the Town Council.

Councillor Rogers asked how the Town Council can support a resubmission or further extension. Gillian said the most important matter was that the full Town Council reconfirm their commitment to Fairtrade in the Town.

Councillor Jackson queried Aldi's position with regard to Fairtrade. Gillian stated that Aldi had been very forthcoming with regard to Fairtrade, and Sainsbury's had for the first 10 years. Councillor Jackson suggested that this could also be brought up when the Town Council makes contact with Aldi.

Councillor Davies proposed and Councillor Garvey seconded that a recommendation be made to Town Council that the Council fully support Fairtrade and the resubmission of Fairtrade Town status.

54. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON POTENTIAL EVENTS AND SUPPORT REQUIRED BY THE BIDDULPH TWINNING COMMITTEE

Jackie Nevill reminded Councillors to sign the Condolence book for Alfreda who was fundamental to the setting up the Twinning between Biddulph and Fusignano.

Jackie noted that the cost for the previous student visit from Fusignano was £1753, though costs are likely to have changed slightly. There are no current plans for children to visit, though there is for adult teachers.

There is an Italian day booked for 9 July 2022. This will include a live link from Italy, as well as some Italian cooking and food at the Town Hall. There will be wine tasting and cheese in the evening.

The Chair and the Mayor of Fusignano are hoping to visit at the same time as the teachers.

On 4 May 2022, the Twinning Committee are having a meal out at Reubens, which is a social event to invite more involvement with the Twinning initiative.

There is also a Twinning meeting at the Royal Oak on 28 February. Councillors were encouraged to attend.

It is hoped there will be a visit to Fusignano in the autumn, although there are no firm plans.

The 25th anniversary of Twinning will fall on 29 October 2022 and a celebration is planned.

An updated Twinning display at the Health Centre was also suggested.

Councillor Davies asked if the above information could be made available online. Jackie noted that there is a Facebook page for Twinning, though it does require an update.

Councillor Rogers asked who was taking over from Alfreda, Jackie confirmed it is Titiana.

55. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM SHARON MIDDLEING- BIDDULPH COMMUNITY OFFICER (SUPPORT STAFFORDSHIRE)

Sharon Middling gave an update that much of her work so far has been getting to know the local community groups. They have reported that the most significant issues are recruiting volunteers and members.

A volunteer event is due to take place on 8 April, a partnership between Support Staffordshire and Biddulph Town Council. A number of groups have expressed an interest in attending markets throughout the year to raise their profile or sell goods.

Initiatives to promote volunteering in Biddulph have been undertaken. This includes a volunteer board at the Town Hall, a regular article in the Chronicle, through the Biddulph Town Council website, Simply Connect and social media.

Sharon has supported a number of Biddulph groups with grants, and more funding for arts in Staffordshire Moorlands is likely to become available. She is undertaking some work on governance and running community groups, and has been working with the owners of the Chapel at Brown Lees to help create a community space at the site.

Councillor Jones asked Sharon how she ensured that she had full coverage of local groups. Sharon noted that she had used social media, local knowledge and Town Council partnerships to find as many groups as possible. Councillor Jones said that he wondered if some had been missed, as he wasn't aware of Lifeline having been contacted. It was agreed for Councillors to review the list of organisations covered to ensure that there was good coverage of local organisations supported.

Councillor Yates noted that the Brown Lees Chapel was privately owned, and a large building. He had spoken to the owner and suggested that one side could be used for supporting start-ups and small businesses, and the other side could be used as a community venue. However, he noted that the building is derelict inside.

Councillor Rogers stated that the last congregation in this church had to wear hardhats due to the level of dereliction.

Councillor Yates suggested that the Coalfields Regeneration Trust may be able to provide some community engagement grants.

Councillor Jackson asked how the Town Council can support Sharon's role to continue past the current fixed-term contract; there is an end date in August with the current funding arrangements.

It was agreed to refer the funding of the Support Staffordshire post to the March Finance, Strategy and Management Committee for consideration.

56. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON MOORLAND PARTNERSHIP BOARD PROJECTS

The Chief Officer noted that the Moorlands Partnership Board had advised that they have funding available. The noticeboard for Halls Road is awaiting installation and the work on Gillow Heath station needs completion. Highways support to close the road to complete the work at Overton Road Trough was required.

Councillor Sheldon had asked support to replace some planters within the Town, and there is also a stone wall and railing that would benefit from restoration. Projects can be 50% funded by Moorlands Partnership Board, with the remaining 50% Town Council funded.

Councillor Yates asked if the tunnel off Footpath 29 could be restored with funding, as did Councillor Jones. Councillor Jones also wondered whether the mining memorial may be eligible for funding. The Chief Officer suggested that the funding for the tunnel may be a longer-term project, as it requires significant groundworks. However, immediate projects could include the railings and wall on Station Road suggested by Councillor Sheldon, and additional planters.

Councillor Jackson asked about the ownership of the railings. Work was also suggested for the railings around Albert. The Chief Officer noted that there had been some issues around ownership of Gillow Health station which affected the placement of the bench, but this has been resolved. Councillor Jackson requested that a 'tub' be installed at the station also. Councillor Jones suggested a truck could be better suited to the site.

Councillor Yates said that if the railing at Station Road are restored, the stone wall underneath will need repointing at the same time. He also noted that neighbours of Gillow Health station did not want benches to be installed in the area as it was felt that this may encourage anti-social behaviour and intrude on the privacy of local residents. Councillor Yates suggested that trucks could be installed, but advised against the benches. Councillor Yates suggested funding for an assessment of the miners lamps, which have been removed from St John's Road roundabout.

Councillor Jones proposed and Councillor Yates seconded that the Chief Officer pursue options for grants from Moorlands Partnership Board within the timescale available. All in favour.

57. TO CONSIDER AN ALLOCATION OF £200 FOR A YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMUNITY GROUP, LINKED TO THE WORK OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S WORKING GROUP

The Chief Officer advised that that a community group for young people at risk of involvement in anti-social behaviour has been proposed. This would be undertaken in partnership with James Bateman Middle School, though the location of the group has not been decided.

Councillor Perkin proposed the funding of £200 for this purpose, Councillor Garvey seconded. All in favour.

58. TO SEEK SUPPORT FOR REPUBLISHING BRIAN NIGHTINGALE'S BOOK OF BIDDULPH WALKS (EMAIL ATTACHED)

The Chief Officer noted that the Town Council had been approached by David Outhwaite to support the republishing of the Book of Biddulph Walks, written by Brian Nightingale, who died last year. Work is currently being undertaken to ensure that the footpaths are passable.

Councillor Davies said he would like to see the walks published on the website, as people do not refer to books so often. He asked about the costs of republishing, but no figures were known.

It was agreed that the Chief Officer would ask for permission to publish the walks on the website.

Councillor Rogers said he felt the Town Council should fully support the republishing of the book, as did Councillor Garvey and Councillor Harper.

Councillor Garvey noted that this linked in with the Environment and Climate Change Working Group's aspiration to promote walking in and around Biddulph. He felt that financial support for the republishing should be offered.

Councillor Garvey proposed, and Councillor Jones seconded that the Committee offer their support. All in favour.

59. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON ARTS ACTIVITY IN BIDDULPH

The Chief Officer advised that a consortium of organisations have been successful in being awarded Arts Council Funding. The project is due to start in April, and consists of two phases. The first phase is setting up the partnerships and formalising arrangements. The Town Council would be a partner in this project.

Councillor Rogers noted that there were a number of arts group in Biddulph and asked how collaboration will occur. The Chief Officer noted that she had recently had a conversation about the role of the Biddulph Arts Forum, given that there is less incentive to meet now funding arrangements have changed. The Chief Officer wondered how the Town Council could best support arts groups in Biddulph if the Biddulph Art Forum ceases to meet.

Councillor Garvey noted that funding had been granted for a 'yarn bombing' event for the Festival.

Councillor Jackson felt this mirrored how the Sport Councils funding was changed, and led to the loss of funding for Biddulph. He expressed concern that Biddulph would have less opportunity for funding than Leek, which has an Arts centre. Councillor Davies also shared the same concerns.

Councillor Jones said he was also concerned about the change of role for the Biddulph Arts Forum and the lack of local knowledge of the funding bodies.

Councillor Rushton noted that under the previous Arts Forum arrangements, groups could get on average £300 a group in Biddulph, but this was changed after Support Staffordshire were appointed by the District Council to administrate grants.

Councillor Davies said that the Biddulph Arts Forum provides a vital role in raising awareness and supporting grants applications so it is important to ensure that the Biddulph Arts Forum continue to meet. It was agreed to discuss this issue in further detail at a future meeting and to invite Eric Cox on behalf of the Arts Forum.

60. TO CONSIDER A RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CIVIC EVENTS WORKING GROUP THAT THE CONCEPT DESIGN FOR THE WAR MEMORIAL AREA SHOULD BE REVISITED (ORIGINAL DOCUMENT ATTACHED)

The Committee considered a design concept from 2015 for the area near 'Albert', which had recently been reconsidered by the Civic Events Working Group. The issue is of particular pertinence as Albert's 100th Birthday is approaching.

Councillor Rogers asked who owns the land in question. It was thought to be owned by Staffordshire County Council, and Councillor Rogers was concerned that the Town Council should not spend money on an area not owned by the Town Council. The Chief Officer stated that the County Council own the land that the war memorial stands on, but not the war memorial on itself. Biddulph in Bloom undertakes the planting in the area.

Councillor Harper expressed concern about a piece of pavement that jutted into the road, though it was confirmed that this is the present layout.

Councillor Davies proposed retaining and renovating the railings, and not installing green space directly around Albert, but carrying out other suggestions in the design concept. Councillor Jones supported this although he felt the shape of the grass behind Albert was an unnecessarily complicated shape.

Councillor McLoughlin wondered if moving the memorial further back may be beneficial, though it was felt that this would be both unpopular and a difficult undertaking.

Councillor Yates said that the restoration of Albert may be at least partly financed by a grant. Councillor Yates also suggested that the site is only a gateway if the one way system was reversed.

Councillor Jackson expressed concern that if the business at the site was no longer a restaurant-type business, whether the tables and chairs would still be feasible. Councillor Jackson was weary that some of the suggestions on the design concept would require Highways involvement, which would be unlikely to be a priority for the County Council.

Councillor Rushton said she felt the green is important and had concerns about the feasibility of the tables and chairs and the impact it may have on the local business.

Councillor Harper said he had concerns about the railings getting in the way on remembrance day and constituting a crush risk of younger children.

Councillor Jones noted that a significant priority is the reducing amount of signage and street furniture in that area.

Councillor Garvey proposed approaching Staffordshire County Council regarding permission to work on this land and to gather some costings; seconded by Councillor Perkin. All in favour except for one abstention.

The meeting ended at 8.16pm

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