

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 20 JUNE 2017

PRESENT

The Mayor – Councillor Wood
The Deputy Mayor – Councillor McGuinness
Councillor Baddeley
Councillor Davies
Councillor Hall
Councillor Hart
Councillor Jones
Councillor Jackson
Councillor Lawson
Councillor Lovatt
Councillor Nicosia
Councillor Rogers
Councillor Rushton
Councillor Salt
Councillor Swift
Councillor Sheldon
Councillor Walley
Councillor Whilding

Also in attendance:
Councillor Harper
Councillor Hawley
Councillor Flunder

Councillor Hart welcomed Councillor Flunder to the meeting – County Councillor for Brown Edge, Endon, Biddulph South and Biddulph East.

7.17 APOLOGIES

All were in attendance; Councillors Court and Redfern were not members of this committee, but sent apologies. Councillor Jackson proposed, seconded by Councillor Hall that a letter is sent to Councillor Redfern acknowledging thanks for his long service on the Bemersley Liaison Committee. This was agreed.

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Dispensations: Councillor Sheldon in any matters concerning Biddulph in Bloom. Councillor Hart in the Local Plan residential site specifics in Biddulph.
- b Other Disclosable Interests. None were declared.

9. MINUTES

- a It was moved to sign the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 16 May 2017.
- b It was moved to receive the Minutes of the meeting of the Burial Grounds Sub-Committee held on 12 June 2017. Councillor Hart noted that the amount of work carried out for the burial grounds over the past eighteen months had been phenomenal. He thanked the Chief Officer and Officer for their hard work.

**10. VERBAL UPDATE ON PROGRESS WITH LENGTHSMAN CONTRACT-
COUNCILLOR JONES**

Councillor Jones reported that feedback had now been received from the County Council specification; they were happy with the specification, and tenders would be sent out the following week. Councillor Hart thanked Councillor Jones and the Chief Officer for the work done; Councillor Jones felt that the praise was due to the Chief Officer alone.

**11. VERBAL UPDATE ON PROGRESS WITH BIDDULPH GRANGE COUNTRY PARK
GRANT APPLICATION- COUNCILLOR JONES**

Councillor Jones reported that Working Group members had taken away parts of the application to complete and bring back to the next meeting. He noted that this was an active and positive Group. He reported further positive news: he had met with Dai Lerner who had pledged support for the idea of a Friends of Biddulph Grange Country Park Group; he pledged Moorlands Partnership Board support and Officer support with completing the application. Councillor Jones had heard myths and rumour about the Country Park, but noted that nothing had been decided. The District Council was very open to what we wanted to do and Councillor Jones wanted to scotch the rumours here and now. Councillor Hart felt it was commendable and he encouraged members to attend the meetings.

The Chief Officer reported that she and Councillor Jones would be at the Country Park on Sunday 23 July 2017 to talk to the people using the facility. The Chief Officer had given a presentation to the Historical Society that week; the group had been very receptive to the suggestions for restoration of the Park and the heritage projects that were ongoing within the town.

Councillor Jones added that there was much support from Brownies, Scouts, Schools and others in the Biddulph Community for improved facilities. Councillor Jones thanked Councillor Sheldon for her support.

12. VERBAL UPDATE ON BEMERSLEY LIAISON COMMITTEE MEETING

Councillors Hart reported that he and Councillors Jackson and Sheldon had attended the meeting, also Councillor Flunder. It had been a very interesting and well attended Committee meeting. The Portfolio Holder, Gill Heath, was also there and Councillor Hart felt that the site would be open for the foreseeable future. Councillor Jackson said it was nice to see so many Biddulph people there; he felt that Stoke City Councillors were pandering to a very local group and not considering the wider area. Councillor Jackson noted that this Council must be very diligent and watch what was happening.

Councillor Jones reiterated that it was vital to keep that facility in Biddulph and strong voices were needed, this Council cannot allow the facility close.

Councillor Jackson noted that the facility was located in Brown Edge Parish and not Biddulph.

Councillor Sheldon felt it had been a very good meeting. The alternatives previously suggested were inaccurate and had not stood up to scrutiny.

The Chairman proposed that standing orders be suspended to allow Councillor Flunder to speak; Councillor Jackson proposed that in future Councillor Flunder be invited to have a spot in public participation. Proposed by Councillor Jones and

seconded by Councillor Harper that standing orders be suspended. All agreed and Councillor Flunder was invited to address the meeting.

Councillor Flunder thanked those who had attended; he wanted to bring in the wider community, not just the few. He had been considering how important that refuse site was and felt it was a very important facility and the town of Biddulph could not manage without it. He would make sure that it would 'not close under his watch'.

Standing orders were resumed.

13. MOORLANDS HOSPITAL UPDATE- ITEM REQUESTED BY COUNCILLOR SALT

Councillor Salt reported on a meeting she had attended the previous week about the possible closure of Leek Moorlands Hospital where a presentation was given by Marcus Warnes of the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). Councillor Jones had also attended along with 300 + members of the public. A consultation exercise would be carried out over the next few weeks looking at all the services provided by Leek, Cheadle, Longton, Bradwell and Haywood Hospitals and consideration of purchasing beds in private nursing homes as an alternative. Councillor Salt encouraged everyone to take part in the consultation.

Councillor Jones had attended the Health Scrutiny Panel the following day and received the same presentation, he felt that the exercise was being driven by 'bean counters'; the average stay in the hospital was 6 weeks, but he feared the decision had already been made.

Councillor Wood felt that this was 'privatisation through the back door'. Leek Hospital provided vital comfort for residents, where a private nursing home could cost up to £3,400 a month he felt that situation could not continue and this Council must oppose it.

Councillor Lovatt thought this was a political issue with continual underfunding of the NHS, and cautioned that private care homes could not be guaranteed to be near to where people lived. She felt that community services were being run down and not in place, it was just not suitable and she was really concerned. Biddulph did not have much involvement with Leek, but did send lots of people to the Haywood- would it be next?

Councillor Lawson felt that the country was still suffering from the recession and wondered where the money would come from to keep the facilities, NHS was badly organised from top to bottom; he felt that the people working in the CCG were not earning their money.

Councillor Jackson noted that he had attended the Town Council Finance Committee meeting on the evening of the meeting in Leek, but had later watched the meeting on line. He felt that both Town Councillors present were brilliant and had asked precise questions, the responses were 'slippery'. Councillor Jackson noted that £800 billion went through clearing banks in this country every day and this was the 5th richest country in the world; we just needed the political desire to do something.

Councillor Lovatt proposed, seconded by Councillor Harper, that a letter is sent with all points raised, to be emailed to all Councillors prior to sending to check that all points are listed. This was agreed.

Councillor Jones felt that the message should be sent out loud and clear that everyone needs to participate in the consultation.

Councillor Harper suggested a link on the Biddulph website.

Councillor Wood noted that the official consultation should be completed on the CCG website and people must respond to that.

14. THE TOWN COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO INCIDENTS SUCH AS THE TERROR ATTACK IN MANCHESTER- ITEM REQUESTED BY COUNCILLOR HARPER

Councillor Harper was concerned that with recent events, in London and Manchester, 'bureaucracy had got in the way of humanity'. Permission had to be sought from Leek to lower the Union Flag to fly at half-mast. A letter of condolence cannot be sent on behalf of the Town Council without permission.

The Chief Officer noted that this was not the Town Council's flag and it had been lowered as a mark of respect quite a number of times over the past few weeks. She had lobbied for a new flag and this was now flying.

Councillor Harper felt there should be a protocol to deal with this kind of event.

Councillor Hall felt that it was appropriate that Councillors could discuss sending letters at the next meeting; if a request goes in the Council's name it should go before the Council.

Councillor Jones felt it should be a bit slicker and authority should be delegated to the Mayor to act quickly.

Councillor Salt added that consensus could be sought via email and carried out if there was a majority.

Councillor Hall felt that Mayor had the authority to write on behalf of this town. Terrorist activity must be condemned and was unacceptable.

Councillor Hawley noted that the flag belonged to SMDC; this Council should request delegated authority to take responsibility for lowering the flag.

Councillor Wood moved that a letter should be sent to the District Council requesting that the Town Council takes responsibility for the flag pole; this should be at the Mayor's discretion. This was seconded by Councillor Jackson, all were in favour.

Councillor Nicosia asked who was responsible for actually moving the flag; the Chief Officer confirmed that it was the caretaking staff at the Town Hall.

Councillor Swift felt it was usually a government directive to lower the flag.

Councillor Jackson proposed that a letter is sent to the Mayor of London, Sadiq Kahn, offering condolences for the recent incidents at London Bridge and Finsbury Park. This was agreed.

It was proposed by Councillor Wood and seconded by Councillor Salt that a letter about protocol over incidents is drafted by the Chief Officer and circulated to all Councillors by electronic mail. This was agreed.

Councillor Harper wondered if there was a definitive list of when the flag would be lowered.

15. REPAIRS TO THE TOWN HALL CLOCK

A letter from Smith of Derby had been circulated. The mechanism within the Town Hall clock needed to be repaired. The Chief Officer wished to make Councillors aware of this and would seek two further quotations for the work.

Councillor Jackson felt that as clocks cost 'an arm and a leg' perhaps something more comprehensive could be considered.

Councillor Hall felt that the repairs should be carried out, following the receipt of two further quotations.

Councillor Nicosia would like to see a different clock face, and suggested getting quotations for a different type of clock. This was seconded by Councillor Whilding and agreed. There were two votes against.

16. CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

1. Police and Crime Commissioner Updates

- High Level Meeting- There will be a meeting tomorrow to discuss the preparedness of local public agencies to respond to any eventuality in the light of recent terror attacks.
- Staffordshire Youth Commission sign up for a second year- 14-25 year olds will continue to 'help shape the future of policing'.
- Slavery not relegated to the past- businesses asked to consider if supply chains are 'clean'. Sue Arnold has reminded businesses of their 'social and corporate responsibility'.
- Volunteers are needed in Staffordshire Moorlands- people encouraged to play an active role in keeping their community safe as part of National Volunteer Week. The PCC praised the work that was done and would like to see people getting involved in improving and developing policing.

2. County Councillor Keith Flunder

Councillor Flunder would like to visit Biddulph Town Council on 4 July to receive updates about the work of the Council. Please let the Chief Officer know if you would like to attend.

3. Police update

There have been some enquiries about the new Police offices within the Town Hall. Sergeant Slinn is not able to attend tonight, but has provided an update: *'There are always police constables on-duty covering Biddulph, but at times demand for service can reduce their availability at the station. Once phase 2 of the building work is complete the police will occupy the ground floor and I do anticipate a 'call plate' installed at the front to contact the police outside the normal office opening times.'*

4. SPCA- Local Councillor Training Course

Wednesday 28 June 2017, 7-9 pm. Please let the Chief Officer know if you would like to attend.

5. Tree Charter

The launch of the new Tree Charter will take place on 6 November 2017, and 800 trees will be planted across the UK. Local Councils have been offered the opportunity to become Charter Branches.

As Biddulph is the Garden Town of Staffordshire, this is something that will be explored further.

Exclusion of the Press and Public

The Chair to move:-

"That, pursuant to Section 100A(2) and (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings whereby it is likely that confidential information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act would be disclosed to the public in breach of the obligation of confidence or exempt information as defined in Section 10 I (1) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act would be disclosed to the public by virtue of the Paragraphs indicated."

The meeting closed at 9.05 pm.

Signed Date