

# MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2019

## PRESENT

- The Mayor - Councillor Davies
- The Deputy Mayor – Councillor Jones
- Councillor Barlow
- Councillor Brady
- Councillor McLoughlin
- Councillor Perkin
- Councillor Redfern
- Councillor Rogers
- Councillor Rushton
- Councillor Sheldon
- Councillor Smith

## 40. APOLOGIES

- Councillor Yates

## 41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests & Dispensations:

Councillors Sheldon in anything related to Biddulph in Bloom.

Minute 46 - The Chief Officer would leave the room for this item

Other Interests: None.

## 42. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Town and Community Committee meeting held on Tuesday 1 July 2019 were **signed** as an accurate record.

The Notes from the meeting of the Young People Working Group meeting held on 12 June 2019 were **received**.

The Notes from the meeting of the Christmas Lights Working Group meeting held on 16 July 2019 were **received**.

Councillor Jones requested a replacement Snow Machine.

Councillor Rushton had information about a Dame; the Chief Officer would update Councillor Rushton about this and timings following the meeting.

Councillor Smith reported that she had spoken to Den Siegerts of Radio Stoke; he had asked to attend the switch on in costume – he would be in the Mitchel Arts Centre (MAC) production of Aladdin this year, and would donate a family pass.

Councillor Davies suggested that Councillor Ruston defer contacting the original Dame until practicalities are worked out.

Councillor Smith noted that local young people were taking part in the MAC production.

The Notes from the VE/VJ Day and Cenotaph Working Group meeting held on 31 July 2019 were **received**.

Councillor Jones confirmed that he would be vice chair.

#### **43. STATION ROAD UPDATE (STANDING AGENDA ITEM)**

The Chief Officer noted that there had been confidential discussion about part of the site at the September meeting of the Town Council. Work had begun on the site; the groundworks were complete and paving was due to be installed. Electricity had been channelled to the site, but some concern had been expressed about the design of the meter housing and its proximity to the adjoining property. The architect had suggested additional planting around the structure to deter climbing. Members suggested a sloping roof on the housing would be more effective.

Design ideas were circulated for the memorial area. To date approximately 50 people had expressed interest in sponsoring a brick.

Councillor Rogers had concerns about the design with a raised mound; he thought this would attract BMX and skateboard users; he preferred the design at the bottom right side (with a wall design).

Councillor Smith concurred, this gave scope for the named bricks to surround a memorial; she would prefer a solid figure to a mesh structure.

Councillor Jones agreed that headsticks would look good, adding that a small wall would provide additional seating, but the structure should not be climbable.

Councillor Rushton was opposed to moving the balance wheel from the front of the Town Hall.

Councillor Sheldon agreed; the late Councillor George Humphries had moved heaven and earth to have it installed there.

Councillor Smith suggested opening up the garden making it more accessible as the wheel was only partially visible from the front.

Councillor Jones noted that this was a whole discussion for another day.

Councillor Jones suggested that the memorial could take the form of a coal tub, Norton Memorial Gardens had incorporated two planted coal tubs.

Councillor Sheldon noted that there were a few scattered around the Chatterley Whitfield colliery site.

Councillor McLoughlin noted that Councillor Harper had compiled a list of 180-200 names of those who had died working in the mines.

Councillor Jones noted that if more names were submitted for remembrance bricks another row could be added.

The Chief Officer summed up the discussion – members preferred the bottom right design, with a raised wall, a solid structure, a coal tub or headstick.

Councillor Perkin was a member of the Friends of Chatterley Whitfield and would make enquiries.

#### **44. TO CONSIDER THE INSTALLATION OF A 'HAPPY TO CHAT' BENCH, ITEM REQUESTED BY COUNCILLOR YATES**

Councillor Redfern proposed that this item is deferred until Councillor Yates could attend. This was agreed.

**45. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE VE/VJ DAY AND CENOTAPH WORKING GROUP IN RELATION TO EMERGING PLANS AND BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS, FOLLOWING THE MEETING ON 5 SEPTEMBER 2019**

A plan for the events in May 2020 was circulated. The Chief Officer outlined progress to date.

The Town Crier would give a cry at midday between 1 and 8 May 2020, with news from 75 years ago.

There would be an exhibition at the Town Hall and visits made to local Nursing and Care Homes.

It had been agreed to adhere to the national timings given by the Pageant Master.

Friday 8 May 2020 - during the day there would be a market incorporating military vehicles.

From 6.30 pm there would be a 1940's dance with Pie and Pea Supper with Cheshire 20 Big Band providing entertainment.

Costs had been sought for a laser display resembling search lights and also a lotus flower projected into space – similar to the 'Bat Signal'.

Union Flag bunting would decorate the High Street and 'sandbags' surrounding the Town Hall.

Councillor Rogers noted that the BUG group were Ukulele players.

There were a number of costs associated with these activities.

The Big Band would be £1000, which could be covered by the entrance fee.

The search lights and laser show would be approximately £550. Councillors felt that these costs were acceptable.

Saturday 9 May 2020 – Councillor Salt was organising a Children’s Street Party which would be ticketed, but free of charge – the main hall had also been booked in case of rain.

Saturday 10 May 2020 – Councillor Jones would hold a morning service with readings, poems etc. Councillor Jones noted that there may be change to the information on the chart as these ideas developed; he would also like a piper to attend.

The Chief Officer was investigating the possibility of adding a plaque to the cenotaph to mark that this town had commemorated the 75 year anniversary and would commission the restoration work, including replacing the missing nose.

Councillor Rogers remembered that sandbags had been used at the 1942’s dance a number of years ago.

Councillor Rushton had stored them at the Launderette and believed that Mr Frank Harris now had them.

Councillor Rogers would make enquiries.

The Chief Officer left the room before discussion took place on the following item

**46. TO CONSIDER CHANGES TO BUS PROVISION FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN IN THE TOWN, ITEM REQUESTED BY COUNCILLOR ROGERS (NOTE: THE CHIEF OFFICER WILL NOT BE IN ATTENDANCE DURING THIS DISCUSSION)**

Councillor Rogers reported that the situation was as detailed in the Biddulph Chronicle. The service would not be available for paying passengers after the October 2019 half term break – six weeks from now. This was a big problem, but the County Council had to adhere to the rules and regulations. Councillor Rogers had met with the bus operator, the issue was in relation to accessibility for children with disabilities; who are currently taxed to and from school.

Councillor McLoughlin had spoken to County Councillor Flunder about this matter, who had sent his apologies for this meeting, but was in the process of

arranging a meeting with County Council Officers (Philip White and Mark Sutton), District Council Officers and interested parties to find a solution.

In Biddulph, over 20 children would be affected, 7 Woodhouse Academy students from the south of the town and 13 at Biddulph High 6<sup>th</sup> form. None of them qualified for free travel, but the bus had seats available, the 13 6<sup>th</sup> form students had previously travelled free of charge with concessionary passes, but no longer qualified due to age limitations. The law would be changed in January 2020 stipulating that vehicles must be disabled compliant and would apply to all single deck vehicles and double deck coaches carrying fare paying passengers. In January 2020, the current bus would still run for students with concessionary passes, but with empty seats. Staffordshire County Council would not allow the seats in Biddulph to be used by non-paying passengers as the ruling had to be adhered to County wide, though there was lack of clarity in the law.

Councillor Jones believed it was paying travellers who were excluded. Parents were willing to pay and had not asked for a free service. However, students from Biddulph Moor had no other way of safely travelling to school, if family were unable to drive them. The road was not safe to walk, especially with shorter darker days approaching.

Councillor McLoughlin noted that nationwide many people were contesting the ruling. The County Council paid for the bus, but would not be allowed to sell seats, so would lose money. Councillor McLoughlin thought it was poorly drafted legislation.

Councillor Smith asked if we were discussing the Hollinshead coach; everyone confirmed this.

Councillor Sheldon thought that this flew in the face of protecting the environment, leading to more cars on the road.

Councillor Rogers thought it nonsensical, the County was saying that children had to walk on a road with no footpaths in the dark. He had met with the bus operator. Councillor Rogers made the following proposal, seconded by Councillor Rushton to be sent to the County Council via Councillor Flunder:

- 1 Allow free travel for sixth formers who live on Biddulph Moor and Biddulph Park. There is no safe walking route between Biddulph*

- Moor and Biddulph High, it seems nonsensical for it not to be safe for them to walk in July, but fine to do so in September. I appreciate that there is no legal obligation to provide free travel for post 16 students.*
- 2 Allow free travel for pupils from Woodhouse Academy to Knypersley in an afternoon only. Parents who shoes Woodhouse Academy did so in the belief that there was a bus service that their children could sue to and from school. The new legislation means that it is not cost effective for an am school run but a pm one could continue as it currently does. Having spoken to parents the pm run is the one they have most difficulty in covering.*
  - 3 These suggestions would be cost neutral to Staffordshire County Council as it would utilise the vehicles that it is currently running.*

Councillor McLoughlin noted that for clarity the County Council could not permit one area to have free travel when other areas did not have the capacity; however, it should be stressed to the County Council that Biddulph was part of the Staffordshire Moorlands, a rural area.

Councillor Jones noted that the objection was not about free travel, but access to a bus, people were happy to pay, but students would not be allowed to get on the bus and pay. Councillor McLoughlin noted that a non-fare paying bus did not have to comply with the new regulations.

Councillor Rogers noted that three disabled students in the town were catered for by taxis, this was a ridiculous law and no one was happy. Councillor Jones added that this law was not designed to apply to this area.

Councillor Perkin noted that until this was tested in court the legislation would not apply. Staffordshire County Council should continue with the current practice and be tested in court, the response by the County Council should be 'we are doing this to protect our children'.

Councillor Jones concurred with Councillor Perkin but emphasised again that parents were happy to pay, a way had to be found as young people's lives were being put at risk.

Councillor Perkin noted that there were exceptions to the law as has been proved in the past.

Councillor Smith felt that there must be something for rural communities where there were dispensations and no provision for paid services.

Councillor Rogers proposal was agreed and would be given to Councillor Flunder for 'ammunition' at the proposed meeting.

Councillor McLoughlin noted that some Counties were waiting until January 2020 to implement the law, Staffordshire County Council should be encouraged to defer too, as so many people were seeking clarification.

Councillor Perkin suggested enlisting the help of the local MP.

Councillor Sheldon suggested contacting other affected areas in the Moorlands and forming a group.

Councillor Jones felt this should be challenged nationwide.

Councillor Sheldon was surprised that an action group had not already been formed.

Councillor Jones suggested deferring action until Councillor Flunder held his meeting.

Councillor McLoughlin reminded members that the service would cease in six weeks.

Councillor Davies proposed to carry out both actions and extend the ruling until January 2020, seconded by Councillor Rogers and agreed.

The Chief Officer returned to the meeting.

#### **47. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON HERITAGE ACTIVITIES AND FUNDING**

The Chief Officer reported that a number of restoration projects were progressing nicely.

The work on the well on Tower Hill Road had been completed; the A527 railings would be finished soon along with the gates at the Town Burial Ground.



BP architecture had created a heritage statement to go with the planning application for the repairs at the Overton Road trough and safety bollards, it was hoped this would be sufficient to satisfy the planners at the District Council. Councillors received a copy of this document.

Councillor Redfern praised the Chief Officer for a good job, well done.

Councillor Davies felt that bollards would destroy the heritage effect on Overton Road and felt that the troughs were not at risk of traffic damage.

**48. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE BIDDULPH THEATRE PROJECT: STAGED**

The Chief Officer reported that a Town Council grant awarded in June was being well spent. A group called 'Staged' had been formed; the Chief Officer and Events and Partnerships Officer had met with two of the organisers who had accepted the offer to use equipment donated to this Council following the disbanding of Biddulph Youth Theatre Experience (BYTE) and would make good use of it. Staged would be holding a publicity event on 6 October 2019 to launch the venture, the Chief Officer would attend. Training in all aspects of the theatre would be offered to volunteers.

Staged would hold rehearsals and hold the event at the Town Hall in Spring 2020. The Chief Officer felt this was both a good use of the gifted equipment and of the grant awarded.

Councillor Jones had a lighting gantry which he would gift to the Town Hall for use by the group.

Councillor Davies had tried to promote the Town Hall; it was great to see this initiative where the facilities could be used, it showed great potential.

The meeting closed at 7.24 pm.

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