

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RECREATION AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2019**

### **PRESENT (Councillors who signed the attendance sheet)**

- Councillor Barlow
- Councillor Rogers

### **Other Attendees:**

- Councillor McLoughlin

### **16.19 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence and reasons accepted were received from:

- The Deputy Mayor – Councillor Jones
- Councillor Yates

### **17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- a) To declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests & Dispensations:  
None.
- b) To declare any Other Disclosable Interests:  
Councillor Sheldon in anything relating to Biddulph in Bloom.  
Minute 19 – Councillor Hart’s partner was a Biddulph Ramblers Committee member.

### **18. MINUTES**

- i. The minutes of the Recreation and Amenities Committee meeting held on 11 June 2019 were **approved and signed**.
- ii. The minutes of the Recreation and Amenities Committee meeting held on 9 July 2019 were **approved and signed**.

### **19. TO RECEIVE INFORMATION FROM THE BIDDULPH RAMBLERS ABOUT THEIR WORK IN THE TOWN AND FUTURE INVESTMENT IN FOOTPATHS**

The Chair welcomed Eddie Dawson and Ken Sale to the meeting. Mr Sale gave a brief history of the collaboration between Biddulph Ramblers and Biddulph Town Council.

Mr Sale added that he was the Secretary for the group which supported Biddulph Town Council and helped with maintenance, supported and advised by the County Council Ranger service

Councillor Harper asked if the Town Council was responsible for insuring the Ramblers. The Chief Officer responded that work undertaken was either covered by the Ramblers or was completed on behalf of the County Council, which provided insurance cover.

Mr Sale noted that the Biddulph Lengthsman carried out work on pathways; the Ramblers work more in the fields, clearing overgrown paths and repairing stiles.

Councillor Jackson thanked the Ramblers for their many years of work; this town was lucky to have dedicated people willing to give up time to improve the environment of the town.

Mr Sale noted that the group struggled to recruit younger members, adding that when he joined, he was retirement age.

Councillor Jackson asked if the group had a Facebook page. Mr Sale replied that it did promote via Facebook all over the Moorlands; they had tried to promote walks and activities in a variety of places. The Chief Officer offered a stall at an Artisan market – free of charge. Mr Sale noted that the group also organised evening walks as part of the Biddulph Festival; these were open to all.

Councillor Salt thanked the group for protecting our highways and byways.

Mr Sale noted that certain areas needed tidying up but it was difficult to be specific. Councillor Harper wondered if the Lengthsman could be directed to help. The Chief Officer responded that the Lengthsman does carry out work on footpaths, but questioned where this should stop as the Town Council is not directly responsible for these areas.

Councillor Barlow asked how far out of the town the Ramblers were working.

Mr Sale responded that they go as far as they can and into neighbouring parishes too; he added that there were 161 paths in Biddulph.

Councillor Sheldon thanked Ken and Eddie for their work repairing and restoring the paths and also her husband loved the Festival walks.

Councillor Salt wondered if Town Council monies could be used for an intergenerational walking project.

The Chief Officer asked if there had been any progress with The Clough path. Mr Sale replied that they had met with the Ranger and thought that the line of the path had been changed. The current definitive map directed walkers across a bridge which had been gone a long time.

The Chief Officer had asked Paul Rochfort to come and visit and for his thoughts on restoration of the bridge and path; she would send this email again.

Mr Dawson added that any problems that the Town Council identified would be considered a priority by the Ramblers.

Councillor Rogers noted that the path at Marsh Green Road was in a bad state, this was noted.

Councillor Hart thanked the two for attending and for their dedication. Mr Sale noted that they were happy to help the Lengthsman, if needed.

**20. TO CONSIDER A REVIEW OF ALLOTMENT PROCEDURES (CURRENT DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE AT: <http://biddulph.co.uk/allotments-2>)**

The Chief Officer spoke about the flow chart which had been compiled in October 2016, amendments were suggested.

Members felt that 5 working days was not enough time to receive a response to an offer. Councillor Garvey proposed that this is increased to 10 working days. This was agreed.

Councillor Jackson cautioned that this Council could spend a substantial amount to get a new site up and running and there was not currently demand on the waiting list; this would need to be considered.

*At 8.30 pm The Chair moved to suspend Standing Orders for 30 minutes, this was agreed.*

The Chief Officer queried where should an applicant be placed on the list after turning down the offer of a plot.

Councillor Sheldon felt that this depended on the individual; if someone did not have the energy to start on a plot that was really overgrown, they should not be penalised.

Councillor Salt suggested adding a mobility needs question to the application form, with disability access on any new plots going forwards. It was agreed that if someone had a genuine medical or family issue, they would remain in their current position on the waiting list. If an individual did not like the plot, they would go to the bottom of the waiting list.

Councillor Garvey noted that this Council had the scope to create accessible plots on any new sites.

Councillor Hart added that we could plan this from the start.

Councillor Salt felt we should also offer a disabled parking space.

Councillor Jackson cautioned that the land opposite the Slater Street site was currently used for parking.

Councillor Harper thought that all sites should have space for those with disabilities.

The Chief Officer outlined a recent instance where two plots had become available at one site. Two people on the list were contacted; one was disgruntled that they did not have the chance to view both plots. There was discussion about how the 'best' plot could be determined. It was agreed that it should not be the role of the Chief Officer to make this judgement; people would be offered a plot.

Councillor Jackson questioned inherited plots. The Chief Officer responded that a family member would be encouraged to add their name to the list, but could not be guaranteed a plot should the family member cease to work the plot.

## **21. BUS PROVISION**

### **a) To receive an update on usage and development of the 93 bus.**

The Chief Officer explained the data that had been tabled. Passenger numbers were consistent with a slight increase. Councillor Salt noted that this was a

public service. People could potentially become isolated without the service, given the figures, that could be 30 people stranded without a bus every day.

**b) To note recent changes to provision in the town.**

Mr Adrian Lawton had written to the Town Council, outlining the changes made to services from 1 September 2019. D&G Service 9 no longer included Brown Lees. First did cover Brown Lees hourly, but at certain times omitted both the Park Lane estate and Brown Lees.

Mr Lawton was concerned that passengers were unaware of the changes.

Councillor Salt suggested appointing a 'Bus Tsar' who could advise on these issues. It was agreed that consideration would be given to this at the 93 Bus Working Group, which could be renamed the 'Bus Working Group'. This would be added to the agenda.

Councillor Sheldon had received several complaints, especially from Brown Lees residents attempting to travel to the University Hospital of North Staffordshire.

Councillor Hart proposed writing to D&G asking for clarification. This was agreed.

## **22. LENGTHSMAN**

**a) Standing agenda item- New jobs for the Lengthsman**

Councillor Davies asked that the hedge on the Uplands/ Woodhouse Lane footpath should be cut.

Councillor Jackson asked that the 90-degree path between Slater Street and St Johns Road needed attention.

Councillor Hart asked that the Mow Lane/ Essex Drive is considered.

Councillor Jackson requested a list of works currently undertaken by the Lengthsman; this would be provided at the next meeting.

- b) To note that a review of the contract is underway; Councillors to provide feedback in relation to current provision.**

Further feedback would be provided at the next meeting; a further year could be granted, subject to consideration of requirements.

### **23. TO NOTE THE HIGHWAYS ENGLAND LETTER**

The Chief Officer had contacted Highways England (following discussions in the Tourism Sub-Committee) to request that signage to Biddulph is improved from the A500, whilst improvement works are ongoing.

The Chief Officer noted that the response received asked the Town Council to pay for any additional costs. It was agreed that the signage had never been replaced when the 'Reginald Mitchell' extension to the A527 was added; it should be emphasised that this was not the town Council's responsibility.

### **24. TO AGREE THAT THE TOWN COUNCIL IS SUPPORTIVE OF A STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL FUNDING BID FROM THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR ENGLAND (RDPE) TO IMPROVE THE VISITOR OFFER ON SOME COUNTRY PARKS (SEE EMAIL ATTACHED, WHICH INCLUDES GREENWAY BANK)**

Councillor Jackson noted that part of the area identified was technically in Brown Edge Parish; the Parish Council aspired to add a Trim Trail.

Councillor Salt agreed adding that this Council should keep abreast of projects for input. The Chief Officer noted that there was also an intention to improve Trent Head Well, which this Town Council had aspired to do. It was agreed to support this initiative.

### **25. TO CONSIDER THE CREATION OR SUPPORT OF A FRIENDS OF BIDDULPH VALLEY WAY GROUP**

The Chief Officer noted that Councillor Yates had requested this item; he would like to facilitate meetings, similar to those held by the Biddulph Grange Country Park Friends. Councillor Hart would support this.

Councillor Jackson reported that Councillor Yates had spoken with the District Council and the Coal Authority as Biddulph Valley Way was under multi-

ownership. Councillor Yates has asked for the support of this Council to continue with this initiative.

Councillor Harper proposed that Councillor Yates take the lead, this was seconded by Councillor Jackson and agreed.

It was noted that this work would support the improvements that the Town Council hoped to undertake at the old station.

Councillor Sheldon noted that Biddulph in Bloom had recently installed a bench on Biddulph Valley with money donated.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm.

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