

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RECREATION AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 2020**

### **PRESENT**

- The Mayor - Councillor Jones
- The Deputy Mayor - Councillor Rushton
- Councillor Barlow
- Councillor Brady
- Councillor Garvey
- Councillor Hall
- Councillor Harper
- Councillor Hart
- Councillor Rogers
- Councillor Salt
- Councillor Sheldon
- Councillor Smith
- Councillor Yates

### **Other Attendees:**

- Councillor Davies
- Councillor Jackson
- Councillor Perkin

### **1.20 ELECTION OF A CHAIR AND DEPUTY CHAIR**

The Mayor called for the election of a Chair. There followed some confusion about the roles that Councillors wished to be considered for, and clarification about who was a member of this Committee (with voting rights). As a result, all proposals were withdrawn and the process started again.

Councillor Harper nominated Councillor Hart for the role of Chair of the Recreation and Amenities Committee; seconded by Councillor Hall.

Councillor Yates nominated Councillor Smith for the role of Chair; seconded by Councillor Rushton.

There was a vote. Councillor Hart received eight votes; Councillor Smith received five votes. Councillor Hart was elected Chair of the Recreation and Amenities Committee.

Councillor Hart called for the election of a Deputy Chair.

Councillor Hall nominated Councillor Garvey for the role of Deputy Chair; seconded by Councillor Jones. Councillor Salt nominated Councillor Smith; seconded by Councillor Rushton.

There was a vote. Councillor Garvey received seven votes; Councillor Smith received six votes. Councillor Garvey was elected Deputy Chair of the Recreation and Amenities Committee.

## **2. APOLOGIES**

- Councillor Baddeley

## **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- i) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests & Dispensations: None
- ii) Other Interests: Councillor Jones is the Chair of the Biddulph Grange Country Park Friends; Councillor Sheldon in anything pertaining to Biddulph in Bloom.

## **4. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Recreation and Amenities Committee meeting held on 10 March 2020 were approved and would be signed at another occasion. Councillor Harper had attended this meeting.

## **5. LENGTHSMAN**

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

Councillor Yates noted that the Corner of Dorset Drive/Station Road needed ongoing maintenance; Western Power were coming to install new fencing and a gate. After this, the bushes on the far side of the brook would need cutting back. The front section was to be prepared for a planting scheme.

Councillor Sheldon queried whether the Lengthsman could look at the entrance of the town from Congleton; this needed tidying up.

Councillor Jones wondered when the path behind Rowan Close would be done.

Councillor Smith asked that footpaths on Edge View Court/Slater Street and Park Lane/Mayfield Road could be trimmed and cleared. The Chief Officer would chase the ownership of the Edge View Court are with Your Housing.

Councillor Salt queried whether the Biddulph Valley Way between Knypersley and Brindley Ford could be improved.

Councillor Hart would take this up with the Ranger at the District Council.

Councillor Yates noted that the tarmac section was District Council; after the tarmac section was the County and Coal Authority parts, which would be maintained by the District Council.

- b) To note that the Lengthsman contract is being reviewed and will be re-tendered in the Autumn.

The Chief Officer noted that any feedback would be helpful in order to ensure that an appropriate tender was created. Councillor Jones queried the timescales. The Chief Officer would work on this during October.

**6. TO RECEIVE A VERBAL UPDATE FROM THE CHIEF OFFICER ABOUT PROGRESS WITH THE ACTION PLAN SINCE THE LAST MEETING (EXTRACT BELOW).  
AN OPPORTUNITY FOR COUNCILLORS TO SEEK ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/ CLARIFICATION.**

14	Biddulph Grange Country Park Visitor Centre	Seek quotations for significant scheme of work to ensure Centre is safe and accessible; aim to open in Autumn 2020.
<p>The Chief Officer noted that the dates had slipped as a result of the lease being delayed. The Asset Transfer Working Group would consider the specification for the electrical work at the Visitor Centre and this would then be sent out for prices.</p> <p>Councillor Jones confirmed that monies had already been allocated for this work. A longer-term project was making this facility eco-friendly.</p>		

15	Improvement of Highways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Implement Highways' consultant recommendations.</li> <li>b) Work with SCC to improve parking on North High Street; consider bollards in alley off John Street.</li> <li>c) To consider speed and use of town centre highways roads, in partnership with Amey and Staffordshire County Council.</li> <li>d) Install new/refurbished signage at entrance of Biddulph</li> </ul>
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Councillor Jackson wondered whether the Lifestream Church entrance could be included within this section for consideration. The Chief Officer would revisit this.

Councillor Barlow noted that he did not believe this would be possible; the church is not considering this at the moment. One gate would save the car park from wear and tear.

Councillor Yates wondered whether there should be a Highways Working Group again. Safer Routes to School should be considered, with enhanced connectivity with existing car parks.

Councillor Yates also wondered whether speeding traffic could be considered again on Dorset Drive.

Councillor Hawley noted that the Highways Consultant had been brought in to support the Neighbourhood Plan; this report was awaited. The Chief Officer confirmed that this had been promised within three weeks.

Councillor Hawley reminded Councillors that Highways is a key part of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Councillor Perkin stated that data was needed in relation to roads in the town; support is needed from local people to gather evidence. This Committee should push for data from County Highways.

Councillor Jackson noted that data could be requested from the County Council. The Chief Officer added that Amey would be providing a quote for further support in relation to Highways. This would have cross-over across a range of work areas.

Councillor Smith felt that the development of Aldi may impact of roads such as Dorset Drive.

The Chief Officer noted that the loading bay at the North High Street was about to be considered as part of the County Council DHP scheme, with consultation with traders.

16	Development of Allotments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Continue to look for development opportunities, particularly Shepherd/Slater Street.</li><li>b) Work with existing sites to ensure sites managed appropriately.</li><li>c) Review of existing paperwork and introduction of overarching Allotment Policy.</li></ul>
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The Chief Officer noted that she was still hoping to develop a new site.

The two existing sites were looking very nice and had been visited towards the end of lockdown.

At Moorlands Road, the fence along one side is deteriorating. The District Council have declined to mend the fence as this is not bad enough. This may be a conversation for the Finance Strategy and Management Committee.

The previous site manager has returned to the role at Park Lane.

Further conversations were needed with Morris Homes, following the removal of trees. These had started to grow better than expected.

An Allotment Policy was being developed. This would include information about bees, poly tunnels, etc. and would add weight to the tenancy agreement.

Councillor Salt could support the development of this document.

Councillor Yates wondered whether the land near the Almhouses at the Biddulph Grange Country Park could be an allotment site.

17	Maintain and monitor footpaths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Work with Ramblers to identify issues and resolve these via Staffordshire County Council.</li><li>b) Identify small improvements that are possible with BTC funding.</li><li>c) Lengthsman to keep some town footpaths clear of debris and overgrown vegetation.</li></ul>
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The Chief Officer noted that there had not been any significant projects identified to improve footpaths in the town. Please consider these sooner rather than later.

Councillor Yates wondered if the Town Council could keep the pressure on the County Council to improve part of the Biddulph Valley Way.

18	Effective management of Burial Grounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) To keep in obedience introduction of Exclusive Rights of Burial.</li><li>b) Improvements to drainage in Section C.</li><li>c) Resurface footpaths in Section M and C.</li><li>d) Tree planting - October 2020.</li><li>e) Introduce Memorial Testing.</li><li>f) Refurbishment of Garden of Remembrance.</li><li>g) Clarify ideas around new Garden of Remembrance development.</li></ul>
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The Chief Officer hoped members had had the opportunity to see the burial grounds recently. Visitors to the Biddulph Grange Gardens had commented very favourably.

The Garden of Remembrance was being improved at present with new chippings and membrane.

Memorial Testing is a significant piece of work. There are potentially 5,000 memorials across the three sites. The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management advertised an organisation who could complete a risk assessment of the whole site and then prioritise the inspection of memorials in a five-year programme, enabling the Town Council to write to people and find solutions.

The Chief Officer noted this risk assessment would be £500; this is absolutely necessary. Proposed by Councillor Jones, seconded by Councillor Yates and approved.

Councillor Hawley felt it was essential to advise visitors about what was happening across the site.

The Chief Officer provided an update on the management of burials during the pandemic. Support was provided, as appropriate. Councillor Hart congratulated the Chief Officer.

Councillor Yates wondered whether the Town Council needed a policy on the management of memorials.

The Chief Officer noted that each memorial would have an individual recommendation. It would always be the priority not to lay headstones flat. Following the risk assessment, this Committee would have the opportunity to revisit each suggestion. A systematic approach would be necessary.

19	Protection/ improvement of Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Explore options to undertake additional mapping with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust.</li> <li>b) Ensure riparian duties at Butterfly Gardens are undertaken.</li> <li>c) Continue to maintain BTC owned/ managed areas.</li> <li>d) Complete Pocket Park and identify new areas for improvement.</li> <li>e) Develop Tree Planting Strategy.</li> </ul>
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The Chief Officer noted that the Lengthsman would be looking at the Butterfly Garden as this needed some clearance. Paths would need some attention. At the last inspection, the water was running easy with no obstructions.

Councillor Smith wondered whether the Morris Homes area could be improved; there are broken balance beams. The Chief Officer would query the intentions.

Councillor Rogers wondered how many people used the Butterfly Garden. Councillor Sheldon noted that this was a bad bend and the path avoided using the pavement.

Councillor Yates felt involvement from the Town Council was important in relation to climate change.

The Chief Officer concluded that it would be the third anniversary of signing the Tree Charter in November; a Tree Strategy would be necessary. Councillor Perkin supported this proposal. Councillor Salt felt that guidance was needed from the District Council.

Councillor Garvey felt that tree preservation should also be considered in this document. The Chief Officer noted that mapping and Tree Preservation Orders should form part of this.

20	Improvement of transport options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Management and monitoring of 93 bus service.</li> <li>b) Active Working Group tackling range of public transport issues, including innovative approaches to working with schools at peak times.</li> </ul>
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The Chief Officer noted that the 93 bus had continued to run through this difficult period. There would be consideration of some minor route variations. The Transport Working Group would meet soon to pick up outstanding actions.

Councillor Rushton wanted to encourage people to put a string of coloured lights outside their homes. This would light up Biddulph and add Christmas cheer.

The meeting closed at 8.53 pm.

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