

**MINUTES OF THE RECREATION AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE
MEETING, BIDDULPH TOWN COUNCIL
TUESDAY 12 APRIL 2022, 6.30PM
HELD AT BIDDULPH TOWN HALL, HIGH STREET, BIDDULPH ST8 6AR**

PRESENT:

- **The Mayor:**
 - Councillor S Rushton
- Councillor E E Baddeley
- Councillor D A Hall
- Councillor K Harper
- Councillor A H Hart
- Councillor K H Jackson
- Councillor J T Jones
- Councillor A Lawton
- Councillor A J McLoughlin
- Councillor W Rogers
- Councillor J Salt
- Councillor N R Yates

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Mrs Sarah M Haydon – Chief Officer (Minute Taker)
- Ms Esther Gladstone – Finance and Administration Officer
- Mr Murray MacGregor - Associate Director of Communications, West Midlands Ambulance Service
- Mr Mark Docherty - Executive Director of Nursing & Clinical Commissioning, West Midlands Ambulance Service
- Vivek Khashu - Strategy & Engagement Director, West Midlands Ambulance Service
- 1 Member of the Public

66. APOLOGIES

Apologies were recorded from:

- Deputy Mayor – Councillor J Garvey
- Councillor C Brady
- Councillor H M Sheldon MBE
- Councillor C M Smith (Absent)
- Councillor G Swift

67. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests & Dispensations: None declared.
- b) Other Interests: Councillor Jones declared an interest in item 72 as Chairman of Biddulph Grange Country Park.

68. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Recreation and Amenities Committee meeting held on 8 March 2022 were approved

69. REPRESENTATIVES FROM WEST MIDLANDS AMBULANCE SERVICE WERE IN ATTENDANCE TO ANSWER QUERIES IN RELATION TO AMBULANCE PROVISION WITHIN THE TOWN: QUESTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS WERE INVITED FROM COUNCILLORS TO THE FOLLOWING REPRESENTATIVES

- **Murray MacGregor - Associate Director of Communications,**
- **Mark Docherty - Executive Director of Nursing & Clinical Commissioning and**
- **Vivek Khashu - Strategy & Engagement Director**

Murray MacGregor said that West Midlands Ambulance Service were very concerned about the performance of the ambulance service. There were specific issues affecting the ambulance service performance, of which one of the most significant was ambulances waiting outside Royal Stoke University Hospital for patient handover. Murray noted there had recently be instances of ambulances waiting over 10 hours outside hospitals, and the ambulance and crew attending to this patient during this wait are unable to respond to emergencies elsewhere. In March there had been an average of 130 hours a day lost with ambulances waiting outside the Royal Stoke.

Murray said that the Rapid Response Vehicle (RRV) that the Town Council had enquired about had historically spent very little time in Biddulph itself. The concern with using Rapid Response Vehicles was that the responder would be left waiting with the patient alone, due to ambulances being stuck at the hospitals and unable to attend to transport a patient to hospital as needed. Murray also noted that the presence of a community ambulance station does not necessarily lead to more ambulances being present in the area. The nearest available ambulance to an emergency is always dispatched, therefore ss soon as the ambulance transfers a patient to hospital, usually the Royal Stoke, the ambulance often remains in the city for the rest of the shift. He also noted that fewer patients are attending hospital now.

Mark Docherty noted that approximately 80% of the patch served by West Midlands Ambulance Service is rural and he felt that a catastrophic failure is on

the horizon. He relayed the case of a patient who had a stroke, who didn't get to hospital for a thrombectomy and will have permanent disabilities as a result. In another instance, an 18 year old died after an ambulance took 17 minutes to response to his cardiac arrest. Mark said that that at present, over 120 incidents of delay causing harm are due to be investigated.

Mark also said that 11% fewer patients being taken to hospital compared to pre-pandemic levels. He noted that the handover delays are not an issue solely related to the pandemic. The handovers got dramatically worse April 2021 and there has been a 6-fold increase in lost hours due to handover delays and this continues to increase exponentially.

There are over 400 ambulances in service in the West Midlands and the ambulance service is quite well resourced, but delays with paramedics are causing issues. While patients are waiting in ambulances at hospitals, there is no running water, no handwashing and no toilet facilities. The hospital won't accept patients in corridors.

Mark said that in order to improve potential outcomes, West Midlands Ambulance Service is keen to develop and promote the Community First Response service and increase defibrillator access.

Vivek Kashnu said that the Community Rapid Intervention Service also aims to provide a pre-admission intervention, as self presenting patients at A&E do compete with ambulances for time. He also noted that while there are handover delays across the country, the amount of hours lost waiting to hand patients over to A&E is particularly high at the Royal Stoke University Hospital. Councillor Jones said he had no criticism of the crews, and he had no doubts about the hospital delays. He noted numerous examples of unacceptable delays. He said that the Freedom of Information request brought about conclusions that performance in Biddulph and rural areas has reduced.

Councillor Jones noted that a Rapid Response Vehicle would be more effective for treatment in at home, especially with reduced conveyance rate.

Comparison between response times for the ST1 and ST8 postcodes showed major disparity. He said that rural response time has been seriously elongated whilst Metropolitan cover improved.

Mark Docherty said that as a Rapid Response Vehicle cannot convey a patient to hospital, it is only an effective use of resources for the 50% of cases where transport is not needed. Mark also noted that it was not a fair comparison to compare current times with historical data, when waiting times were measured to the First Responder with a defibrillator. He said that with up to 150 ambulances stuck at hospital, no service can accommodate this level of loss of work hours.

Mark said that in turn, there are 150 patients remaining in hospital at the Royal Stoke University Hospital, fit for discharge but unable to leave as there were insufficient care options available for them.

Councillor Jones asked how the disparity between the ST1 and ST8 postcode could be best addressed.

Murray MacGregor said that Community First Responders, increased numbers of defibrillators and more people trained and willing to administer cardio-pulmonary resuscitation can contribute to first aid. For every minute of cardiac arrest where no CPR is administered, there is a 10% reduction in survival rate, so increasing public willingness and ability to respond in an emergency is essential. Murray also noted that Denmark had a 25% survival rate for those that had a cardiac arrest outside of hospital, compared to 7% in the UK. This is thought to be due to training and publicly available defibrillators. The aim is to have a defibrillator every 400m to maximise the opportunity for use.

Councillor Jones felt that it was a disgrace to rely on volunteers.

Councillor Rogers thanked the team and had a lot of respect for the work of West Midlands Ambulance Service. He said that he was aware of ambulance crews being frustrated at being sent to jobs at people's houses which did not require conveyance to hospital, and this in turn uses resources. He said that Rapid Response Vehicles were effective locally. Local first responder groups have disbanded, but they have in the past provide a huge support to people who were waiting for an ambulance.

Mark said that he appreciated that cars were ideal, but given limited resources, a vehicle that has more versatility is preferable. Comparing current figures to previous years is difficult as the health service is in a different place.

Councillor Rogers noted that there was lengthy training to become a First Responder, which had previously put people off, but Mark said that the training. Murray noted Community First Responders are currently being recruited.

Councillor Salt asked what West Midlands Ambulance Service was doing to improve the situation. Mark replied that the organisation is seeking to maximise front line resources with more ambulances, more technicians, reducing redundant buildings, taking on new paramedics and offering new student paramedic training. The Community Rapid Intervention Service continues to reduce the conveyance rate, which is now down to 37%, and additional call takers are being recruited.

Councillor Salt asked if there could be a specialist stroke / CPR vehicle, but it was noted that this would be difficult to position and would be unlikely to be of particular benefit as all stroke patients need to be taken to hospital for scan and diagnostics which would determine the best course of treatment.

Councillor Salt also asked what was West Midlands Ambulance Service role in improving health services. Mark Docherty said that more personal responsibility was needed in order to address the problems that health services were facing, but addressing this does not fall within the remit of West Midlands Ambulance Service. Councillor Salt asked how Biddulph Town Council can play a role, and what financial support would be available for this. Murray noted that NHS Charities money is available to support people to undertake CPR training and people can also be trained as Community First Responders. He agreed to share details of the options with Biddulph Town Council to support this.

Councillor Harper and Councillor Jones also noted that Biddulph Lifeline undertakes training also.

Councillor Lawton said that handover data was very concerning and queried whether those that self-present get prioritised over ambulances conveying a person to hospital. Murray MacGregor said that everyone is clinically triaged and priority is only undertaken on health needs. Councillor Lawton noted that he had not seen many ambulances queuing at the Royal Stoke University Hospital, but Murray said that there had been 22 ambulances queuing on the same day.

Councillor Harper said that had to use an ambulance several times recently. He noted that the ambulance service used to provide some funding towards defibrillators. Murray said that there is some NHS Charities funding for defibrillators, but most is being directed towards front line services at present. Mark Docherty also noted that ultimately the Clinical Commissioning Group / Integrated Care Service currently has the overall responsibility for health care services and funding in the region.

Councillor Jackson said a key issue for him is the loss of the Rapid Response Vehicle as this made a massive difference in anxiety and loss, and helps people who do not go to hospital.

Mark Docherty said he understood that people have an attachment to Rapid Response Vehicles but feels that they provide a false sense of reassurance. He said ideally they would be provided but not at the expense of dual crewed ambulance.

Councillor Jackson said he was concerned at the fragmentation of NHS. He also noted that there are significant costs with the ongoing maintenance of defibrillators.

Councillor Yates noted the ambulance service are one part of a system which is struggling. Other issues include problematic GP service provision in Biddulph, which in turn increase the burden on struggling A&E services. He asked what mechanisms are in place for dealing with issues at Royal Stoke University Hospital, and suggested Nightingale Hospitals could have provided solutions. Vivek noted that Primary Care forms a huge part health care system and in Stoke-on-Trent there is currently a 30% vacancy rate within Primary Care. Attendance patterns at A&E at the Royal Stoke University Hospital are also changing with more self presentations and less ambulance processes. The clock for the 4-hour waiting time starts either when crews register or 15 minutes after arrival – whichever comes first. Mark Docherty also noted that the problem with the Nightingale Hospitals was staffing. There have been suggestions of a static ambulances outside the Royal Stoke. However, West Midlands Ambulance Service do not support this proposal as similar schemes have not worked well. The main issue to overcome is the ambulance delays, and patients unable to be discharged due to care needs, for which the County Council must play a role.

Councillor Salt proposed to support the 'Making Every Contact Count' initiative, working with Primary Care and Health services should be on future agendas and meetings with local primary care providers; seconded Councillor Jones. All in favour.

70. TO RECEIVE A RECOMMENDATION FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP IN RELATION TO GROUNDS MAINTENANCE AT SPRINGFIELD ROAD, FOLLOWING CONSULTATION WITH NEIGHBOURS.

Following consultation with residents of Springfield Road, replied expressed a clear preference for continued mowing. Councillor Jackson said he wasn't surprised that people wanted regular mowing.

Councillor Jackson moved, and all Councillors agreed that the mowing of Springfield Road green space be put out to tender, based on these recommendations.

71. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON DAMAGE TO BENCHES AT THE BATEMAN WALK

The Chief Officer noted that a number of benches on the Bateman Walk had been vandalised. The police have committed to increasing visibility in the area.

Biddulph Rotary are keen to carry out repairs, and the Chief Officer has requested that they let the Town Council know the costs so that the Town Council can contribute.

72. TO CONSIDER THE MANAGEMENT OF THE FIELD AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE BIDDULPH GRANGE COUNTRY PARK

The Chief Officer updated that the Town Council has been invited to a meeting between Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and Staffordshire Wildlife Trust regarding the field at the entrance of Biddulph Grange Country Park. Biddulph Town Council has previously expressed an interest in taking on that field. The Chief Officer wanted to be clear about the Town Council's position on this.

Councillor Jones noted that it had previously been agreed at the District Council that the Town Council could lease or manage the field, and hoped that this was honoured. Councillor Yates supported the same sentiment.

Councillor Jackson said there could be space for an overspill car park in the area. He supported Biddulph Town Council taking responsibility of the field. Councillor Jackson queried any potential cost, it was noted that the cost would be a peppercorn rent.

Moved by Councillor Harper that the Town Council pursue taking on a lease for the field at the Country Park, seconded Councillor Jones, All in favour.

73. ITEM REQUESTED BY COUNCILLOR HART- LARGE VEHICLES INCREASINGLY USING MOW LANE

Councillor Hart stated that he had received several queries regarding concerns about heavy vehicles coming down the Mow Lane, with residents nervous that the vehicles will crash into the houses, and rattling the local properties.

Councillor McLoughlin said that he had seen a particularly large vehicle using the Lane and would support a weight limit. Councillor Jones said that he supports a weight limit, though is aware that there have been issues getting weight limits in place at Woodhouse Lane.

Councillor Yates said that the issue is exacerbated by road haulage usage on rural roads. Therefore licensing and planning should consider this issue in the future.

Councillor Rogers noted that Satellite Navigation is an issue and would like to understand how to report issues with these companies.

Proposed by Councillor Jones, it was agreed to refer the matter to the Transport Working Group to consider the scope of the area in question. All in favour.

74. JOBS FOR LENGTHSMAN (STANDING AGENDA ITEM)

Councillor Salt requested that planting be undertaken at Station Road Gardens.

It was also requested that there was a large amount of wood left at Biddulph Grange Country Park, but Councillor Jones said that at present Staffordshire

Moorlands District Council will not undertake to remove the wood, though this may change with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust involvement.

Councillor Jones requested that the bench at Newpool Terrace be re-sited.

Councillor Jones requested that the defibrillator phone box at Biddulph Park be cleaned.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

In accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, s1, the Council is to determine which items, if any, should be taken with the public excluded.

75. TO CONSIDER LAND OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE TOWN (STANDING AGENDA ITEM)

The Chief Officer confirmed that enquiries were ongoing.

The meeting ended at 9.12pm.

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