

**NOTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
BIDDULPH
TUESDAY 23rd MAY 2023, 6PM
HELD AT BIDDULPH TOWN HALL, HIGH STREET, BIDDULPH ST8 6AR**

PRESENT:

- **The Mayor:**
Councillor A K Harper
- **Deputy Mayor**
Councillor N R Yates
- Councillor N Eardley
- Councillor S Fletcher
- Councillor A H Hart
- Councillor D J Hawley
- Councillor F A Holdsworth
- Councillor M A Hopkins
- Councillor K J Jackson
- Councillor J T Jones
- Councillor C Kisicki
- Councillor A C Lawton
- Councillor W Rogers
- Councillor C Smith
- Councillor C Wood

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Sarah M Haydon – Chief Officer (Minute Taker)
- Jodie Hancock – Events and Partnerships Officer
- Angela Williams – Administration Officer
- Margaret Warman – Governance and Compliance Officer
- Susan Booth – Customer Support Assistant
- John Robinson – Town Crier

1. Apologies

- Councillor C Brady (Absent)
- Councillor Rushton
- Councillor Salt
- Councillor Proudlove
- Councillor A C W Parkes (Absent)
- Councillor J I M Garvey

2. To confirm the minutes of the last Annual Town Meeting held on Tuesday 17 May 2022

Moved by Councillor Jones; seconded by Councillor Hawley. All agreed.

3. Presentation of the Annual Report and achievements from 2022-23 by the Chief Officer

The Chief Officer tabled the Annual Report, which reflects the achievements and challenges during this period. As 22 Councillors were elected in 2019, they could not have foreseen the Covid pandemic, changes within our monarchy or the cost-of-living crisis.

The Chief Officer read segments highlighting key aspects of the Report:

- In 2022, we were saddened to hear about the deaths of a number of ex-Councillors. We marked their deaths by lowering the Town Hall flag and reflecting on their service to the town. We were also devastated to lose two serving Councillors: Councillor Sheldon and Councillor Lawson.
- In 2022-23, the Town Council was awarded the Local Council Award Scheme Quality Gold.
- Celebration of the centenary of the cenotaph in Biddulph Town Centre. The Town Council worked with partners to re-create the unveiling ceremony. Later this year, the cenotaph played a vital role in bringing together the community for a period of reflection for Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday.
- We were pleased to partner with the Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce in May 2022 to deliver a Business Roadshow, providing advice about a range of subjects - from grants to support with legal issues. And in March 2023, we held a Business Networking event in the Town Hall, providing support to a range of organisations in our town
- The Town Council has an Environment and Climate Change Working Group. In 2022-23, we planted over 500 trees in our town, supported the District Council's orchard initiative and planted over 400 trees as part of the Queen's Green Canopy project.
- At the start of Autumn 2022, a wide range of groups helped to pull together a programme of events and warm spaces that were free (or low-cost) for the community to attend.
- The 93 Bus Service was also available at a reduced rate to help people get to crucial appointments and link with services within the town.
- The Town Council has also become a referring agency for the Foodbank, linking with key agencies and ensuring vulnerable people have gas and electricity in their homes.

- The Town Council has also become a referring agency for the Foodbank, linking with key agencies and ensuring vulnerable people have gas and electricity in their homes.
- This year, the people of Biddulph showed tremendous generosity of spirit. We provided toys for over 100 children. The support from partners and businesses has been incredible.
- The Town Council is working towards becoming a Dementia Friendly Community. In 2022-3 we were proud to partner with Approach Staffordshire to provide a Carer Support Café. We still offer a popular Dementia Friendly Cinema screening within the Town Hall.
- This year, we also welcomed the Beth Johnson Foundation into the Town Hall to provide a Bereavement Friendship Group. In 2023-24 we are hoping to host Douglas Macmillan, who will be organising a group to support those with a cancer diagnosis.
- The Town Council supports a number of large events within the town, either by arranging them ourselves or by providing funding for others to organise them. 2022 was a tremendous year for large events, with the Jubilee activities across a range of venues within the town, the Biddulph Festival launch (combined with Biddulph by the Sea), Classic Vehicle Show and the Christmas Lights Switch-on.
- The Town Council raises money through Council Tax (the precept), services provided and by accessing grants that are available from external funders. In 2022, we were fortunate to receive funding from Severn Trent Water for repairs to the footpath and bridge at Briarswood. We also had an allocation from Western Power to raise awareness of energy saving. Awards for All funded Jubilee celebration activities, and Staffordshire County Council provided funds for temperature monitors. The Welcome Back fund helped with town centre activities. The Woodland Trust and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council supported our tree planting projects.
- In 2022-23, the Town Council agreed that a key focus was Health and Wellbeing. We hosted the GPs surgeries in the delivery of flu and covid vaccines. In April 2023, we organised a Health and Wellbeing Day in the Town Hall, and provided blood pressure checks through our regular 'Feast and Flicks' event. We also worked in partnership with a local business to complete First Aid training. We are planning defibrillator training for the 2023 Biddulph Festival, for the whole community.

- Each month we publish a guide to all the activities that are taking place in the Town Hall.
- In addition to projects that we plan throughout the course of the year, we maintain a large burial site, two allotment sites and several areas of green space. We fund the 93-bus service, offered by D&G. At the Burial Grounds, 102 people were interred in 2022-23.
- Our allotment sites continue to be full, with around 30 people on the waiting list. Current allotment holders met at the start of 2023 to agree priorities for development for 2023-24.
- The Town Council is keen to work with young people in our town. In January, we welcomed back the Schools Learners Forum with representatives from schools around the town. We spent some time this year working with young people at Woodhouse Academy around the importance of elections, as part of their PSHE Day. Officers from the Town Council also provided advice and support at the High School Careers Fair in April 2023.
- The reception at the Town Hall aims to answer or provide signposting in relation to a wide range of queries, and we were delighted to welcome our first Customer Service Apprentice in October 2022.
- As the year drew to a close, we worked with a range of partners across the town to mark the Coronation of King Charles III.
- We also presented pin badges to young people at local first schools as a memento of the time.

Councillor Jones gave thanks to the Chief Officer and her team for supporting the Town Council.

Councillor Lawton would like to express his thanks for the standard of this document, and the information provided.

Councillor Hart expressed his appreciation for the team that the Town Council has, and is very proud of how Biddulph Town Council work together for the benefit of the residents.

Councillor Yates congratulated the Council for being competent and progressive with an open-door policy. He is proud that the Council has successfully supported an apprentice.

Councillor Jackson reiterated the achievements of the council and stated that this is positive work for this new Council to build on.

The Mayor stated that he is looking forward to working together.

4. Feedback from Tea with the Town Council; any actions for the Town Council to take forward.

Councillor Jackson reported that the bus shelters are in disrepair and need looking at.

Councillor Smith reported that she has met with a lady that would fit the need of the role that has been discussed at the health and wellbeing working group, to provide advocacy support.

Councillor Wood noted that that in Stoke a company provided new bus shelters in return for advertising.

Councillor Harper reported that the residents are concerned with the anti-social behaviour within the town and the perceived lack of Police in the Town.

Councillor Smith requested a push in publicity around the future meeting with the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner.

Councillor Yates has received requests from Biddulph in Bloom members looking for support and sustainability of their group.

Councillor Jones stated that the bus shelters have been discussed at the Transport Working Group previously.

Councillor Holdsworth reported that members of the public reported the dangers around crossing the road on Craigside/ Station Road.

Councillor Rogers also reported that residents are concerned about the lack of Police in the town.

5. Open Forum- To discuss any other issues raised by any elector present.

The Town Crier gave thanks and expressed his appreciation to the Town Council, the Chief Officer and her team.

The Town Crier gave an update on Fusignano which has recently been devastated by severe floods. He reported that homes have been flooded, and that the riverbanks were close to bursting.

The Town Crier requested that the Chief Officer could send a letter to offer the support of the Town Council and give thanks for looking after the group of young people who were visiting from Woodhouse Academy.

The Meeting ended at 6.41pm

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