

Sandy Town Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Policy Finance and Resources Committee of Sandy Town Council which was held in the Council Chamber at 10 Cambridge Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire on Monday 11 September 2017 commencing at 7.30pm.

Present: Cllrs P N Aldis, P Blaine, T Cole, W Jackson, M Pettitt, M Scott (Chairman)
D Sharman, and P Sharman

In attendance: Cllr N Thompson and Mr C Robson (Town Clerk)

Actions

1 Apologies for absence (35-2017/18)

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs Hill and Osborne

2 Declarations of interest (36-2017/18)

i) Declarable pecuniary interests – None

ii) Non-pecuniary interests – None

3 Public Participation Session (37-2017/18)

No members of the public were present and no questions had been received in advance of the meeting.

4 Minutes of previous meeting (38-2017/18)

RESOLVED to receive the minutes of the Policy, Finance and Resources Committee held on 31 July 2017 and to approve them as a correct record of proceedings.

5 Financial Reports (39-2017/18)

i) A balance sheet and detailed financial report showing income and expenditure against the revenue budget for the year to 31st July 2017 had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

A Member commented that general rates for the car park are high and whether this includes the market. The Clerk stated that a rates review was requested following the cancellation of the market. A Member queried whether the proposed changes to support the doctor's surgery would result in a change in rates. The Clerk said that it was unlikely but he would investigate the matter.

A Member queried the underspend in 403 4011. The Clerk explained that the general rates were budgeted for in line with CBC's estimates for the year. The actual rate in this case was lower than estimated.

A Member noted that expenditure on the cricket club maintenance budget was low.

Town Clerk

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It was noted that more expenditure would be incurred as end of season work was carried out.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the accounts.

- ii) Members received and reviewed overview report from the Clerk.

Admin

A Member commented that they found the report to be very helpful in answering questions which arise from the accounts.

It was **RESOLVED** to receive and note the report.

- iii) Members scrutinised a schedule of payments made since the previous meeting.

The clerk explained that a large payment of £4,098 was for the annual HR, employee and business safe services. This includes HR support and health and safety support and assessments.

A Member queried a payment to Beds Fire and Rescue. The Clerk explained that this was the cost of a new defibrillator which was purchased for the Bedford Road Pavilion. These costs have been reimbursed to the Council by the Mayor's charity account and the Sandy Football Club.

A Member queried a payment to the Community Heartbeat Trust and whether this was for defibrillator training. The Clerk confirmed that it was and that payment was required in advance of the session. It was noted that there were still a lot of vacant places on the course.

RESOLVED to approve the schedule of payments.

- iv) Bank reconciliations and statements.

Cllr M Scott

RESOLVED that Cllr Scott scrutinise the bank reconciliations and statements and sign these as approved at the end of the meeting.

6 Action List (40-2017/18)

Members received the Action List and updates from the Clerk.

The Cemetery Working Group is scheduled to meet on Monday 18th to agree the amended plans for the depot. These will then be

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submitted to CBC. The cess pit at the depot site has been emptied and the alarm removed in preparation for demolition. Awaiting start date from Archaeologist.

The Clerk informed Members that CBC's contract manager was due to meet with SLL to review the Jenkins contract in mid-September. It is hoped the agreement can be signed following this.

Members noted that report.

7 Mobile Disability Access Ramp (41-2017/18)

Members received a report from the office on the purchase of a disability access ramp to be used on Remembrance Day. The ramp would provide access to the War Memorial during and on the day of the Remembrance parade.

A Member commented that this was an important bit of equipment and that the Council should provide this facility for events it is involved in. Even if the ramp was only to be used for this one event it would be an important and worthwhile provision. There are a lot of areas in the town which are difficult to access and it is important that the Council take steps to ensure it provides access for all where possible.

It was proposed and seconded to support the recommendation that the Council purchase a premium length fold wheelchair ramp.

A Member raised a concern about whether the ramps measurements would allow sufficient footpath spaces for a wheelchair or mobility scooter to safely access it. The Clerk informed Members that the 8m ramp was needed to meet gradient requirements. A dropped curb in front of the memorial means there will be sufficient space for someone to access the ramp.

It was suggested that the Council borrow the ramp from the railway station to test that it will work.

RESOLVED that the Council purchase a mobile ramp and that option 1, a higher quality premium ramp is bought subject to checking the practicalities and ensuring the ramps dimensions will allow for safe access.

Admin

8 Ride on Mower (42 -2017/18)

Members received a report from the Town Clerk on the purchase of a new Council mower. The Clerk informed Members that there was an error in the report and quote A's trade-in amount for old

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equipment should be £2,000, not £600. The overall amount in the report was correct.

It was proposed and seconded that recommendation 6.1 be agreed by the committee.

A Member stated that the Council is used to a high standard of cut for sports pitches and queried whether the new mower would be able to achieve a similar standard. The Chairman informed the committee that it would and that a demonstration was carried out to compare the cut to the cut of the current mower and a new cylinder mower. The result had been better with the new mower as it also removed dead grass bents which were missed by the cylinder mower.

A Member asked where the mower would be stored while the depot was built and asked whether we should wait to accept collection of the machine. The Clerk commented that we could wait to collect the machine until the new depot was in place, or store it in our temporary storage facility which has CCTV and locked gates.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the Council purchase a Roberine F3 Triple Flail mower for the maintenance of its grassed areas and that the quote from company A be recommended for acceptance.

9 Budget Review Report (43 -2017/18)

Members received a report on Council's revenue budget from the Town Clerk and reviewed expenditure and recommended 2018/19 budget levels.

Members reviewed each budget code and commented as follows;

401 – 4001 – Admin salaries. Does this include a budget for a dedicated minute taker to assist the Clerk in taking meeting minutes? The Clerk advised that it did not, but did include an allowance for expanding an administration position to 37 hours per week.

401 – 4003 – It was noted that NIC contributions seem to have been overbudgeted in previous years. The Clerk confirmed that this was the case and a reduction was recommended for the next financial year. NIC contributions should be 13.8% of gross salaries on any earnings over the £680 threshold.

402 – 4011 – It is likely rates will increase and the budget for next year should increase by a certain percentage to reflect this. This will

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be the same for all general rates budgets.

402 – 4008 – A Member asked why training budgets were split between admin and grounds staff. The Clerk explained that some training, such as playground inspection and tractor driving was specific to the grounds team and covered by their training budget.

402 – 4050 – The future of the Tourism expenditure budget will need to be discussed at a future meeting. It may need to be rebranded and a greater understanding of what expenditure falls under which budget is required. This also applied to 402 1003.

403 – 4017 – Members noted the need to increase the budget for refuse disposal, in part due to increased fly tipping. Members discussed possible alternatives, including taking waste to the public tip. The Clerk is to investigate whether this would be possible.

Town Clerk

408 – 4011 – A Member commented that the rates for the car park were very high and consideration should be given to having a charity run the car park. The charity would be exempt from rates, but may require an income to be produced from the car park.

Members were surprised at the level of car park income. The Clerk explained that the parking passes were sold on a one-time purchase basis and did not generate ongoing income.

Admin

A Member commented that vehicles were being left in the car park for long periods and complaints had been received by members of the public about this. It was agreed both matters needed to be reviewed and the car park discussed at a future meeting.

Town Clerk

408 – 4100 – Members noted the reduction in the CCTV budget. A Member commented that a full discussion on CCTV was needed to look at what benefits we were getting for the fees paid. It was agreed to pursue a visit to the CCTV monitoring office.

Town Clerk

501 – 4012 – A Member queried why the Council was paying for water rates at the Banks Pavilion. There is no longer a public toilet there and any water use will be for the Cricket Club. Therefore, they should look at covering the costs.

501 – 1256 – A Member queried why the income from Scouts, ACF & SSLA was £5. It was explained that the leases for the land from the Council were for Peppercorn rents of £1 per year.

Admin

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502 - Members queried the cost of the management fees. Agreed that a report comes back detailing the work associated to the management fee costs and re-establishing the Riddy Working Group to be annually or bi-annually.

602 – 4200 – A Member queried if this covered refreshments for meetings. The Clerk said that it did not, but would cover any refreshments for events/occasions which the Mayor agreed to hold. It was noted that the budget also had to cover the Deputy Mayor’s expenses.

Admin

Members discussed the grants budget and agreed that it needed to be reviewed. A report on the grants process and details of all grants paid out over recent years is to come back to the next committee meetings.

Members agreed that the report was useful, but that subject to the amendments detailed it did not need to come back in this format to Members until it formed a substantive part of the precept considerations.

10 Memorial Bench Policy (44 -2017/18)

Members reviewed and discussed the draft Memorial Bench Policy.

A Member stated that he welcomed the policy and that it was needed. However, at this point the policy was not quite ready to be adopted. The overall aim and guidance of the policy is in place but there needs to be a further review of the wording to remove duplications and errors.

A life span of 10 years seems short for benches, especially the recycled plastic benches which are robust and should have long life spans. If a bench is serviceable after 10 years the Council should use its discretion to continue maintaining the bench and it should not be automatically removed if the donor is no longer contactable.

The policy currently states that only one plaque should be allowed per bench, however relatives may want to add additional plaques and this should be allowed at the Council’s discretion.

A Member commented that the donor should look after the wooden benches which were intended for approval in the Cemetery. It was commented that this would cause confusion and one policy should apply to all benches. Once donated the bench would become an asset of the Council. The Member followed up that if that is the case the Council must ensure it can remove the bench without

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recriminations from the donor if it deteriorates beyond a serviceable level.

A Member noted that Fallowfield and the Church Yard were missing from areas covered by the policy.

RESOLVED that the Memorial Bench Policy be approved subject to amendments detailed above.

11 Community Engagement Strategy (45-2017/18)

Members received a draft community engagement strategy for review. The Clerk informed Members that an original draft was looked at by Council in 2013, but never adopted.

A Member commented that the draft presented was an improvement on what the Council currently publicized and that the language used was friendly and encouraging. There were some small points that required checking and amendments needed but overall it was well written.

A Member commented that subject to some alterations and spelling amendments the strategy could go forward to Council for adoption.

A Member queried what the costing associated with the strategy would be and how it would be monitored. What was presented was a policy, not a strategy, as it did not make it clear how it would be monitored, funded and what its implications would be. It should have a budget for achieving this set against aims.

A Member commented that there was no point bringing a policy or strategy into effect if it can't be carried out. The success of the policy is down to internal efforts by Members and staff. A Member noted that our involvement with the community needed to improve.

To be of any use progress would need to be reviewed on a yearly basis. How we do that would be the strategy. It was agreed the present draft was a policy document not a strategy and it should be changed accordingly.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the Community Engagement Policy be adopted by Council and that the Council considers its strategy for implementing and reviewing the policy.

12 Chairman's Items (46-2017/18)

None

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13 Date of next meeting (47-2017/18)

It was noted that the date of the next committee meeting will be 23 October 2017.