

Sandy Town Council

Minutes of the meeting of Sandy Town Council held virtually via Zoom on Monday 12th April 2021 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs P N Aldis, P Blaine, A Gibson, J Hewitt, A M Hill, W Jackson, T Knagg, R Lock, C Osborne, S Paterson, M Pettitt, P Sharman, M Scott (Chair) and S Sutton

Absent: Cllrs N Thompson and CBC Cllr S Ford

In attendance: CBC Cllrs C Maudlin and T Stock, Mr C Robson (Clerk), Mrs V McFarlane (Administrator) and one member of the public.

Before the meeting started, the Chairman led a two-minute silence which was held as a mark of respect for the recent sad passing of HRH Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, to reflect on his remarkable life and to give thanks for all that he had done - including being the constant strength and guide to Queen Elizabeth and giving many years of service to our country.

Action

1 Apologies for Absence (131 -2020/2021)

Apologies had been received from CBC Cllr S Ford.

Admin

2 Declaration of Interest and requests for dispensations (132-2020/21)

- i) *Disclosable Pecuniary Interests* – None
- ii) *Non-Pecuniary Interests* – None
- iii) *Dispensations* – None

3 Public Participation Session (133-2020/21)

Councillors heard from Mr Paul Moss, a member of the public and a member of the East Beds Model Railway Society, which has been in existence for 60 years and has been a rent paying tenant at The Roundabout Club in Sandy for 46 years. The Society has recently been issued with an eviction notice from the Club, and has been given only four weeks from the point of permitted access on 17th May through to 17th June, when all assets, materials etc will have to be removed. The Club has been planning works for some 12 months which has been enabled by a grant from Central Beds Council. Mr Moss questioned whether CBC knew that the Society would be evicted when the grant was applied for, and how the Roundabout Club was able to secure public funding for works to a private club which gives no access to the public apart from in the form of a commercial rental transaction such as theirs. The submitted

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planning application did not show the internal layout or any internal changes to be made that have been the reason for eviction.

Mr Moss also asked what STC were able to offer, and what help CBC could provide in terms of possible relocation, given how quickly the eviction process will have to be. He mentioned that the former Days Inn and Sandye Place Academy are both standing empty and asked if they could be considered.

A Member commented that the most urgent consideration was storage whilst another Member suggested approaching the Grand Union Housing Group who might be able to hire out a garage.

CBC Cllr Stock confirmed that The Roundabout Club had applied for a Community Asset Grant but hadn't mentioned evicting any users. Cllr Maudlin added that a decision on the Sandye Place site is still with the DfE, but the Conference Centre on the old Days Inn site could be an option and she will contact the Head of Housing to see if this is a viable option.

CBC Cllr
Maudlin

The Mayor added that the Town Council will need to discuss this issue when there has been time to reflect and the Clerk confirmed that this can be added to the next CS&E agenda, which may now not be on 19 April due to the week of national mourning. The Clerk also stated that the same question and comments had been sent in from a Mr Alan Cooper and Mr John Wakeman - other members of the same Model Railway Society.

Town
Clerk

The member of the public left the meeting.

Cllr Paterson had received an email from a member of the public stating concerns about some issues discussed on social media, including dog theft, speeding motorcycles, and littering where the perception seems to be that nothing is being done to prevent or penalise such actions. The resident asked what the Town Council is doing to prevent the rubbish being left around the town. The question will be taken to the next CSE committee meeting for further consideration.

Town
Clerk

The Clerk received a request from Robert Colson that we lobby for wildlife 'slow down' signage to be installed around Sandy, particularly St Neots Road, as increasing numbers of hedgehogs are being run over. The Mayor suggested this be considered by the Environmental Group, which was agreed.

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The Clerk had received the following questions from the SG19 group.

1) Standing Orders.

"Should Standing Orders be so framed that an individual member may not be allowed to offer a view on behalf of council other than that as resolved".

It was agreed that this question would be considered by the Policy, Finance and Resources committee.

2) New Road/Station Road

"A number of years ago STC raised concerns over the number of HGVs that used the Bedford Road/High Street route through the town and suggested they be re-routed via A1, New Road, Station Road, and Potton Road. Will STC join with SG19 to again explore this possibility with CBC Highways department?"

3) London Road

"In view of the problems recorded in London Road will STC join with SG19 to press CBC's Highways Department to give priority to meeting the Council's commitment to improve air quality - especially at the southern end - and to safety by making improvements at the northern end to reduce 'rat running' by traffic leaving the A1 at speed?

A 'given' would be the removal of the sign on the A1 that directs traffic to Sandy town centre via London Road, West Road and St Neots Road. HE has, in the past, confirmed it is willing to do this, but CBC indicated a wish to erect further signage in support of the direction indicated. This would be a retrograde step that would not be well received, based on the feedback we have received."

It was agreed that to allow sufficient discussion by Members questions 2 & 3 would be considered by the Community, Services and Environment Committee.

Town
Clerk

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- 4 Minutes of previous Town Council Meeting (134-2020/21)**
To receive the minutes of the meeting of Sandy Town Council held on Monday 1st March 2021 and to approve them as a correct record of proceedings, subject to the amendment being made to the date of the Development Scrutiny meeting from 4th to the 25th January 2021.
- 5 Minutes of Committees and Recommendations therein (135-2020/21)**
To receive and note the minutes of the meetings of the following committees and sub-committees and (if applicable) to approve recommendations therein which do not arise elsewhere:
- i) **RESOLVED** to receive and note the minutes of the Community, Services and Environment Committee held on 8th March 2021.

It was proposed, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the pledge to be part of WildEast's land commitment be approved by Full Council. Cllr Sutton read out the pledge to Members: '*We pledge to increase the biodiversity of our land holding by the additional planting of trees and shrubs, alongside more environmentally friendly working practices. To increase the accessibility and knowledge of the countryside via the Green Wheel by residents and visitors. To carry out the objectives as detailed in our Environmental Plan and share best practice with other organisations within the WildEast area.*'
 - ii) **RESOLVED** to receive and note the minutes of the Development Scrutiny Committee held on 8th March 2021 and 29th March 2021.
 - iii) **RESOLVED** to receive and note the minutes of the Human Resources Committee held on the 22nd March 2021.
 - (iv) **RESOLVED** to receive and note the minutes of the Policy, Finance and Resources Committee held on the 29th March 2021.

The Chair assured Members that the overspend on water at Sunderland Road recreation ground was being taken seriously

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and was being investigated. He emphasised that this overspend was not being blamed on the sports club.

A Member asked if we are able to take our own water meter readings and it was confirmed that this is being undertaken on a weekly basis.

6 Reports from Central Bedfordshire Councillors (136-2020/21)

Members received verbal reports from the Central Bedfordshire Councillors.

Cllr Stock confirmed that the week commencing 4th April has seen a significant reduction in Covid cases, with 30 being recorded across Central Bedfordshire. She added that we cannot be complacent with the relaxation of rules from today, the hospitality sector re-opening and schools returning after Easter.

CBC's Public Health team are now doing in-house contact tracing which means information can be passed on and the public protection team can be sent out to locations, more quickly. The testing guidance says that all adults to be tested two to three times per week who are in public facing roles and there are now a few pharmacies offering a click and collect service, with our nearest one being in Biggleswade.

Additional Restrictions grants have launched and are going well and also the Re-Start grants. Central Government have launched the Welcome Back Fund of £56m and Central Beds Council will receive an amount for promoting and reviving local high streets.

Cllr Stock met with a couple residents from the Winchester Road area. There has been a significant amount of fly tipping in the area, and they are working with Grand Union Housing to try and sort. The Waste Officer is going out and looking at the area regularly. Cllr Stock has taken photos which will be forwarded on to the Waste team.

Grants funds of £2,000 have been allocated to each Ward Councillor so if Members know of any small groups that might benefit, to let CBC Councillors know. There is a £200,000 Asset Grant, where groups can bid for a local community project.

A Member asked if there was a timetable for the road regeneration in the Winchester Road area. Cllr Stock confirmed that the garages were removed last year and there has been a planning application to

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remove the planters, although there has been a delay. Environmental officers were involved and wanted to be part of the application. The next meeting of the project group is to take place on 24th April 2021.

CBC's Craig Siddell has organised a truck for people to bring their waste and white goods and this will be advertised via Facebook and by letter to residents.

A Member commented that the last clear up operation at Winchester Road was vast and wondered if CBC would be operating with Preen, but good that it will get started in September. He also questioned why Covid figures were stated as being 'less than 3' cases rather than showing the actual figure of 0,1 or 2. Cllr Stock confirmed that this was due to GDPR, as individuals might easily be identified if say, 1 case was listed.

Cllr Maudlin thanked STC Members for promoting Greensand Country. She confirmed that there has been a consultation on electric vehicle charging points and also looking at home-school transport for 5-16-year-olds and for post 16 education.

Cllrs Stock and Maudlin met with MP Richard Fuller as a result of the serious accident that occurred at New Road and he will liaise with HE to try and get white lines marked on the road. Cllr Maudlin stated that the central reservation at Upper Caldecote is proposed to close with the planning application for more units there.

7

Decision Making after 6th May 2021 (137–2020/21)

Members considered a report detailing options to enable effective, legal decision making until such times as face-to-face meetings can safely return. The report outlined all the issues and a date for the annual meeting of Full Council also needed to be decided.

Members discussed the difficulties of returning to face-to-face meetings after 6th May and commented that the government has put all councils in a difficult position. A Member proposed Option 1, with a review in three months.

A Member said he thought that a legal challenge is unlikely and other authorities had already indicated they would be continuing with virtual meetings. A Member agreed that face-to-face meetings before the end of June are a non-starter and the Council would need to ratify any decisions made at remote meetings held after 6th May at the earliest opportunity. It was confirmed that the accounts

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review and internal audit need to occur at a meeting in June. Given the Government's roadmap it is envisioned the Full Council meeting scheduled for the 28th June will be able to safely go ahead face-to-face.

A Member asked the Clerk to clarify if they were being asked to vote on an act that is essentially illegal and the Clerk confirmed that although there was still a case pending in the High Court, holding virtual Council meetings after the 6th May would leave decisions made open to legal challenge.

A Member stated she wasn't comfortable with voting for Option 1 which could be illegal and would therefore abstain. Members commented that Option 2 seems the clearer solution. A Member added that there has been no clear guidance from the Government. Arrangements should be made to return to meetings in the Chamber from 21st June given that concerts and the like will be re-starting.

It was Proposed, Seconded and **RESOLVED** that the Council go with Option 2 – agreeing a temporary scheme of delegating to the Clerk, to be supported with ongoing virtual council meetings as per the agreed meeting schedule.

It was Proposed, Seconded and **RESOLVED** that the annual meeting of Full Council be on Thursday 6th May 2021.

Town Clerk

In light of the passing of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, the Clerk informed Members that the Council may not be able to hold meetings next week or issue agendas. He had received guidance from NALC stating agendas could not be issued during the period of national mourning. It was agreed that the committee meetings scheduled for 19th April are postponed until 26th April. It was observed that it would make sense to also push the Events Working Group meeting back by a week.

Town Clerk

8 Church Wall Repair (138–2020/21)

Members received and considered quotes on repairs to the St Swithun's Churchyard wall.

The Clerk confirmed that he had struggled to get quotes and had only received one – of £1,330 excl VAT – to date but was currently waiting for a second. Four contractors had inspected.

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		Town Clerk
9	Sandy Cricket Club – Artificial Wicket (139-2020/21) Members received a report on the Cricket Club's grant application for a new artificial wicket at Sunderland Road. A Member emphasised that this would be of particular benefit for youth cricket and Sandy Cricket Club are making a big effort to promote youth players and proposed that when a letter of support is issued, that the support should include that reference.	Admin
10	Action List (140-2020/21) Members received and noted the action list on Full Council items.	
11	Neighbourhood Development Plan (141-2020/21) Members received and considered a report from the Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group. It was noted that the Steering Group was making good progress. It was Proposed, Seconded and RESOLVED to note the information and recommendations in the report.	
12	Street Audit (142-2020/21) Members received and noted a written update from Cllr Pettitt on the street audit carried out by Councillors. Cllr Pettitt added that liaising with disabled wheelchair users had taken him off at a slight tangent and that he was also waiting for additional reports. It would be very useful for Members to look at the FixMyStreet App, but added that it has been disappointing that in certain areas, no action has been taken, or where it has been taken, the quality is poor. The picture is therefore quite mixed. The next report will be fuller and will include outstanding reports from other Members. A Member suggested that if anyone has difficulty in providing their report, to let Cllr Pettitt know and others may be able to do it in their place.	
13	Leisure Services (143-2020/21) Members noted that they were invited to a meeting to be held with Central Bedfordshire Council Leisure Services on 13 th April 2021.	

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Members noted that joining details would be sent, and it would be at 2.30pm. All were encouraged to take part.

14 Correspondence (144-2020/21)

Members received correspondence from Mid Bedfordshire Citizen's Advice.

A Member proposed that Citizen's Advice be invited to make a formal grant application through the normal process, and it should be checked what money has been awarded previously. Another Member was surprised that a sum of money wasn't mentioned, and this would need to be known before considering.

The organisation would be invited to submit a formal grant application for consideration by the Policy, Finance and Resources Committee.

Town Clerk

15 Consultations (145-2020/21)

i) Members received and considered a Statutory Notice from Central Bedfordshire Council on proposed changes to the speed limit along Station Road, Sandy.

A Member asked why the speed limit had extended into the estates. Cllr Maudlin said that it costs the same to include one or multiple surrounding roads. Several Members were surprised that the speed limit had not been extended down to the Tesco entrance/exit and the blind bend there, the New Road bus turning circle, as well access into the new development on New Road, where concerns had previously been raised when the planning application was discussed. CBC Cllr Maudlin said that she will put these comments forward to CBC's Paul Salmon. Residents have shared some concerns about speeding traffic and a Member feels that this initiative is long overdue. The wider triangle of land on New Road is in an atrocious state and it is believed that it belongs to Network Rail. CBC are liaising with Network Rail to resolve, although a Member said that there is a bus stop and parking restrictions so thinks it could be CBC land. Cllr Maudlin will investigate.

Cllr Maudlin

It was Proposed, Seconded and **RESOLVED** to support the proposed changes to the speed limit along Station Road, Sandy and comment that this should be extended along New Road to the bus turning circle.

ii) Members received and considered a Statutory Notice from Central Bedfordshire Council on a proposed raised table at Station Road,

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Sandy. It was noted that this was an addition to a previous scheme of traffic calming measures to be carried out a Station Road. Members spoke at length on the matter.

A Members stated that traffic calming measures would be needed to support the 20mph speed limit the Council had resolved to support.

CBC Cllr Maudlin informed Members that a formal crossing was investigated but was not possible. A Member stated that the proposed raised table is at a natural place where people will cross. The raised table will mean those who know the area will drive more slowly. A resident who had expressed support for the proposal, raised a concern regarding drainage and CBC Cllr Stock said the design and positioning will be checked, although a Member suggested that the professionals should have pre-empted these possibilities already. The resident raising the concern had expressed their support for the traffic calming measures.

It was Proposed, Seconded and **RESOLVED** to support the proposed raised table at Station Road, Sandy.

iii) Members received and considered a Public Notice from Central Bedfordshire Council on the introduction of disabled badge holders only parking at Churchill Way, Sandy.

It was Proposed, Seconded and **RESOLVED** to support the proposed introduction of disabled badge holders only parking at Churchill Way, Sandy.

iv) Members received communication from Central Bedfordshire Council on the East West Rail consultation.

Members need to respond to the communication by 9th June. A Member said that there are four possible station sites all very close to the Black Cat roundabout. Two of these are north of the A428 and the other two, south. We want Sandy to benefit from the new line, so do Members want it to be nearer to Sandy? To get the route changed may be a big battle and there are pluses and minuses to being nearer to the town. The two nearer options may be marginally preferable, but we don't know if roads are to be provided and it is difficult to know what the consequences might be. If the Town Council does not take a view, then we are letting things happen rather than influencing. So, there are questions to be asked as to the way the Council wants to respond to the communication.

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A Member suggested that a short discussion would not do this topic justice so to consider more fully, would need a special meeting or to put it on a future agenda. This would also give time to consult with the Community.

It was agreed to include this item on the Full Council agenda on 24 May 2021.

Town Clerk

16 Reports from Councillors on Outside Bodies (146-2020-21)

- (i) Members received and noted the report from Cllr Hill on the Sandy Sports and Leisure Association (SSLA) committee.

Cllr Hill added that the SSLA had now agreed a preferred contractor to carry out the pitch refurbishment works. They had received bids from four good companies. The committee chose the best known and most experienced company, SIS. Everything is moving forward positively with a good meeting last Thursday. The planning application for the all-weather pitch has been validated and will get written assurance which will bring it to a conclusion.

- (ii) Members received and noted the report from Cllr Hill on the Sandy Twinning Association committee.

The Mayor added that Easter greetings had been sent to Skarszewy and Malaunay.

- (iii) Members received and noted the report from Cllr Hill on the Greensand Country Plan.

Cllr Hill said the presentation was very polished and added that Countryfile featured the Leighton Buzzard to Marston Moretaine part of Greensand Country a week and a half ago. A Member said that we therefore need to highlight this part of the Greensand walk more and lots of good things are happening. Another Member added that there is nothing to stop local groups approaching Greensand Country and everything is interactive. Cllr Hill agreed that more awareness is needed.

17 News Release (147-2020/21)

It was agreed to issue news releases on the following matters:

- Tree Planting.

Admin

18 Chairman's Items (148-2020/21)

The Mayor informed Councillors of the sad passing of Huntingdon's Cllr John Davies. Many Councillors will have known Cllr Davies and if

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details of a funeral are provided to the office these will be passed to Councillors for information.

19 Date of Next Meeting (149-2020/21)

Annual Meeting of Full Council - Thursday 6th May 2021.