

Sandy Town Council

Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of Sandy Town Council held in the Council Chamber at 10 Cambridge Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire on Monday 17th December 2018 at 7.00pm

Present: Cllrs P N Aldis, P Blaine, T Cole, A Gibson, A M Hill, W Jackson, T Knagg, C Osborne, M Pettitt (Deputy Mayor), M Scott (Mayor), P Sharman and J Sparrow

Absent: Cllrs G Leach, S Sutton, N Thompson

In attendance: Mr C Robson (Clerk), Cllr P Smith (CBC)

	Action
<p>1 Apologies for Absence (139-2018/2019) Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs S Sutton and N Thompson.</p>	Admin
<p>2 Declaration of Interest and requests for dispensations (140-2018/2019) i) <i>Disclosable Pecuniary Interests</i> - None ii) <i>Non Pecuniary Interests</i> – None iii) <i>Dispensations</i> – None</p> <p>Cllr Aldis declared a personal interest as treasurer of the Sandy Historical Research Group, who applied for Sandye Place to be recognised as an Asset of Community Value.</p> <p>Cllr Osborne declared a personal interest as his wife is Chair of Governors of St Swithun’s school, and he sits as a governor for Albans school, which was mentioned during discussions on a later item.</p>	
<p>3 Public Participation Session (141-2018/2019) No members of the public were present.</p>	
<p>4 Sandye Place (142-2018/2019) Councillors received a copy of the section of Sandy Town Council’s Community Plan which referred to Sandye Place and a copy of the last resolution made by Council on the matter.</p> <p>Central Bedfordshire Councillor Peter Smith, who sits as a governor of Sandye Place Academy (SPA) provided Members with a comprehensive overview of the situation as he understood it and the information which is currently available to him;</p>	

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The focus of the SPA governors is to get to the end of the academic year with good results and ensure that the pupils who are still at the school receive the best education possible. Results are expected to be above the national average, marking a big improvement on previous years. Currently working to ensure the link between the schools is strong. The vast majority of pupils will move to Sandy Secondary School and all pupils have sorted places for the future.

Sandy Secondary School and SPA are working closely together, following SPA's previous isolation which resulted from the creation of a cluster group it was not part of. Many of SPA's movable assets are to be transitioned to other schools for the benefit of pupils. The DfE approve of the transition of education assets to the secondary school and the Trustees of SPA are not under pressure from the DfE to sell the assets.

SPA Trustees will carry out a managed exit of the site and by the end of August 2019 it is envisioned that the school buildings will be empty. SPA wishes to ensure that the facilities are usable from the day they relinquish the site.

On 1 September 2019 all responsibility for the physical site and the facilities on it will revert to the DfE. The Trustees' financial responsibility will continue until the end of December 2019.

The lease for the site must be handed back to DfE via a legal process, which is currently being negotiated by solicitors. It is feasible the lease could be back with the DfE by August 2019 and from 1 September 2019 responsibility will lie with the DfE, not Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC). A caretaker will be on site until the end of December 2019 and the SPA financial accounts cannot be closed until that same time.

Central Bedfordshire Council have asked that the DfE return the lease to them as soon as possible. However, this is in the hands of the DfE and cannot be pushed forward by CBC. If the lease is returned to CBC, conditions about its use for educational purposes may remain in place and CBC would have to apply to have these removed. Until there is some clarity on whether a condition will limit use of the site to education only, it is not possible to carry out feasibility studies. Expert advice would also be needed on how suitable the facility would be for alternative uses and what investment would be needed to support any changes.

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Cllr Smith commented that now is a good time for the Town Council to put its ideas across to the parties involved.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Smith for the comprehensive information he had provided and asked for Members' comments.

A Member stated that the Council's Community Plan builds a basis for how Sandy Town Council would like to see the facilities at Sandye Place used in the future and this should be actively communicated with Central Bedfordshire Council, the trustees and governors of Sandye Place Academy, the DfE and Alistair Burt MP. The Clerk informed Members that the Council had previously also written to the schools commissioner.

It was proposed and seconded that the Council;

- 1) Welcomes the successful Asset of Community Value application and CBC's recognition that this is an important site to the town.
- 2) Oppose any form of residential development on the site in the future.
- 3) Place on record all other aspects the site could be used for, as highlighted in the Council's Community Plan.

The Proposal was seconded.

A Member commented that it seemed illogical for assets to be removed from the site to other schools if Sandye Place was still being considered for further educational use. If an educational use was to be maintained at the school, it may only need part of the site and there may be other community opportunities which the Town Council could get involved with.

A Member raised concern over the emphasis placed on the DfE, as they will not be considering Sandy as a whole and the community's needs. It is probable that the DfE will want to pass the lease back as soon as possible and it is hoped CBC have a plan in place for when the DfE pass the lease back to them.

Cllr Smith pointed to an example of the DfE getting involved in local decisions when it objected to CBC's proposed closure of Wootton School. It is likely the lease will be passed back, but it may have conditions attached.

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A Member commented that the Council's Community Plan identifies the needs for Sandy and many could be broadly linked to education. The Plan summarises the opportunities Sandye Place could provide for satisfying many of the town's needs. Councillors are anxious that STC should be involved in discussions and the support of CBC Councillors would help with this process.

A Member stated that he broadly agreed with the proposition put forward, but that he could not support ruling out all residential development on this site. The site is large and funding resulting from some residential development could provide a source of funds for other community projects and investment into the site. Members discussed the possibility of using part of the site to support the need for an elderly care home.

A Member raised concern of mixed education and leisure use of the site based on the difficulties which appear to have been experienced at Sandy Secondary School.

The Proposal on the table was Seconded.

A Member asked if the proposal could be amended to include allowance for 'limited development'.

A Member commented that at some point the Council may need to take a less robust stance against residential development elsewhere in the town, however this is one site that the Council must ensure is protected.

A Member commented that the Council hasn't rejected all residential development, but has set out a preferred direction of development to the east of the town.

The proposer did not wish to make an amendment to the proposal to include limited residential development but did accept an amendment to state that C BC ward Members supported the Council's position.

A Member asked whether Sandy Town Council would be able to say that its Community Plan had the commitment and support of CBC Ward Councillors. CBC Cllr Peter Smith stated that the document has his backing. He also informed Members that he did not believe there were any plans to look at residential development on the site and that it had not been included in

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the Local Plan, which CBC would be using to guide its future development.

RESOLVED that the Town Council;

- 1) Welcomes the successful Asset of Community Value Application and CBC's recognition that this is an important site to the town.
- 2) Oppose any form of residential development on the site in the future.
- 3) Place on record all other aspects the site could be used for as highlighted in the Council's Community Plan and that CBC Ward Councillors support the Council's position.

5 Chairman's Items (143-2018/2019)

There were no Chairman's items.

6 Date of Next Meeting (144-2018/2019)

Noted that the date of the next meeting will be Monday 21st January 2019.