

Sandy Town Council

Minutes of the meeting of Sandy Town Council held virtually via Zoom on Monday 24th May 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, M Pettitt (Chair), M Scott and S Sutton

Absent: Cllrs S Paterson, P Sharman, N Thompson and CBC Cllr S Ford

In attendance: CBC Cllrs C Maudlin and T Stock, Mr C Robson (Clerk), and Mr T Keaveney of CBC.

Action

1 Apologies for Absence (24 -2021/2022)

Apologies had been received from Cllrs S Paterson, P Sharman, N Thompson and CBC Cllr S Ford.

Admin

2 Declaration of Interest and requests for dispensations (25-2021/22)

Cllr Osborne declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 14 II as a resident of a street impacted by the temporary road closure.

3 Public Participation Session (26-2021/22)

There were no members of the public present. The Clerk informed Members he had received communication from a Mrs Lovett of Longfield Road. Mrs Lovett and neighbouring residents have reported parking issues around Longfield and Glebe Road, with work vans parked on verges. The issue seems to be that there are too many vehicles and not enough spaces. The resident reported that fire engines had struggled to get down the roads on two occasions due to the congestion. The Council considered the communication but noted that it did not have the powers to act on Highway related matters and encouraged the resident to contact CBC Ward Members to see if Highways is able to assist. The Clerk confirmed that the resident had been advised to contact CBC Highways.

Cllr Aldis raised a question from a member of the public on the condition of Pleasant Place, which is well used by the public. Cllr Stock explained that the road is not under Highway jurisdiction or on the deeds of the properties which border the road. Cllr Stock is pursuing adoption of the road by CBC so the relevant works can be undertaken to bring it up to standard.

CBC Cllr Stock

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4 Minutes of previous Town Council Meeting (27-2021/22)

Members received the minutes of the annual meeting of Sandy Town Council held on Thursday 6th May 2021 and **RESOLVED** to approve them as a correct record of proceedings subject to the following amendments;

- Cllr Hill be deleted from 'Present'. Cllr Hill was absent and had sent apologies.
- Cllr Osborne be added to the list of Leisure Services Working Group Members.

Admin

5 Minutes of Committees and Recommendations therein (28-2021/22)

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 Development Scrutiny Committee held on 26th April 2021 and 10th May 2021.
- ii) **RESOLVED** to receive and note the minutes of the Community Services and Environment Committee held on the 26th April 2021.
- iii) **RESOLVED** to receive and note the minutes of the Policy, Finance and Resources Committee held on the 10th May 2021.

6 Reports from Central Bedfordshire Councillors (29-2021/22)

The Mayor welcomed Mr Tony Keaveney, Assistant Director for Housing Service at Central Bedfordshire Council and invited him to update Members on The Meadows facility.

Mr Keaveney commented as follows;

- **Grounds Maintenance** – CBC is progressing a grounds maintenance contract. There is not currently a 'go live' date and so, as an interim measure, the Scheme Manager is arranging for the grass to be cut as a matter of urgency. CBC recognise that the site entrance and surrounding areas does not look as it should, including the Heras fencing.

The appearance of the whole site is important to CBC and along with future tree planting and cutting of the verges by

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the Highways Team, we will co-ordinate the overall grounds maintenance of the site and monitor the contract.

- **Heras fencing** – The Heras fencing has been moved and some sections opened to allow access to the COVID 19 Lateral Flow Test site that is currently situated in the Conference Centre car park. In addition, CBC have recently cut back a number of the conifer trees and this has resulted in the wind getting through and causing some of the temporary fencing to fall over. When this occurs, it is being rectified quickly.
- **Site entrance/gateway** – The space requires a non-standard barrier (due to the width of the access) and, therefore, the lead times are slightly longer than for a standard solution. CBC are awaiting confirmation of the lead times/installation date from the supplier.
- **New perimeter fencing** – This forms part of the planning application that is currently progressing and CBC Housing are awaiting a decision from CBC Planning (pending resolution of discussion with CBC Highways). If permission is granted (which is expected), they will be able to erect the approved fencing and remove the temporary security (Heras) fencing that is in place.
- **Conference Centre** – The site has generated significant commercial interest. The conference centre was always a secondary consideration in CBC's purchase of the building/site. Over the next few weeks, CBC will give thought to options, which include disposal. Unfortunately, this does mean that – at this time – CBC are unable to agree to the conference centre being used by charity or social groups. Mr Keaveney confirmed he had received STC's letter outlining its thoughts on use of the centre.
- **Water meadows and planting scheme around the site** – a substantial scheme of planting has been designed. The proposals will significantly improve the biodiversity of the site and the costs will be partially met through secured grant funding of £10,000 (Greensand Partnership) and potentially other grant funding which is not yet confirmed.
- **Planning** – CBC Housing has a current planning consent for the Meadows, and they continue to respond to queries from CBC Highways. The planning process does take time and Mr

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Keaveney is reasonably confident that the process will be resolved soon.

The Chairman thanked Mr Keaveney and opened the discussion up to questions. A Member asked what the current occupancy rate was at The Meadows. Mr Keaveney explained that it is reasonably full, but a gradual approach is being taken to allow The Meadows to establish itself.

A Member commented that Sandy lacks a large community venue. Mr Keaveney acknowledged this but commented that the conference centre is in a bad state of repair and was nearly derelict inside. Business cases would need to be developed and a decision on the future of the centre was not going to be rushed.

A Member asked if CCTV would be considered for the site. Residents had expressed some concerns about activities happening on the perimeter of the site. Mr Keaveney said CCTV was not currently planned but he would take this away for consideration.

The Chairman thanked Mr Keaveney for attending. Mr Keaveney left the meeting.

CBC Councillors reported that;

The COVID Indian variant is increasing in Central Bedfordshire, but at a slower rate than the previous week. CBC Comms will be issuing communication to remind businesses and individuals on guidance and actions to take to reduce infection rates.

A letter will be going out to Winchester Road residents to update them on the Winchester Road Regeneration Scheme progress.

CBC Cllr Stock and Cllr Pettitt had met with residents to look at issues around parking at Swan Lane and Cllr Pettitt thanked Cllr Stock for her efforts in getting one matter resolved. Proposed double yellow lines to help address hazardous parking have been welcomed. Cllr Stock and Pettitt would be meeting with an environmental officer from CBC to discuss what action might be able to be taken to deal with regular parking issues that were causing concerns in this area. Councillors commented about other large vehicles which were regularly parked on residential roads and were causing a hazard. Cllr Pettitt asked that registration numbers of these vehicles be passed to him for inclusion in his discussion with the CBC officer.

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The Station Road traffic calming measures are to be considered by CBC's Traffic Management committee on 25th May 2021. The Council has already issued a response in support of the proposed measures.

7 Action List (30–2021/22)

Members considered the action list and it was noted that discussion on East West Rail would take place later on the agenda.

Members expressed their frustration at the lack of any progress on clear communication at the SPA site. In addition there are other important issues to Sandy, such as the need for new care facilities and leisure provision. It was commented that at some point soon, a wider discussion is needed as to STC's point of view that there appears to be limited progress. The Clerk commented that CBC are assigning 'single points of contact' for Town Councils. These points of contact will be from the senior management team and will help bring together information and discussion on the various projects and matters happening within the town. The AD of Assets has been assigned as Sandy's point of contact and in an initial meeting with the Clerk, has expressed his desire to understand the Council's ambitions, its Community Plan and developing Neighbourhood Plan. Further discussions are due to be held with a view to meeting with Councillors.

Councillor Pettitt informed Members he had not been able to complete a full written report on the street audit, as to be discussed at agenda item 9. Cllr Pettitt had circulated an email to Members detailing that seven additional potholes and other defects have been reported in the past month using the FixMyStreet (FMS) tool. Three others have been re-reported where action had been promised. One such example is Report 350727 for a badly sunken gutter and kerbs o/s Nos 51 & 53 Swansholme Gardens which causes the footpath to flood after heavy rain. This has now been reported for the third time. It was noted that Councillors Sutton and Hill had offered their assistance in continuing the process across the town, which will be the next priority.

It has been encouraging to see that more reports have been registered by residents using FMS, and Highways is responding by marking up defects for attention. It is to be hoped that the work due to take place in Bedford Road happens soon.

Cllr Pettitt commented that it had been disappointing to see several reports which on the face of it really ought to receive attention still being deemed unnecessary, for example Report 353748, Bedford

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Road j/w Swan Lane. A lack of clear consistency seems to be illustrated by Report 355882 for a pothole at the end of Laburnum Road being turned down for attention while a defect of similar size subject of Report 354389 fairly close by o/s No. 103 Laburnum Road, was deemed serious enough to be scheduled for repair.

Finally, Cllr Pettitt commented that he had undertaken a preliminary survey of access issues especially in and around the town centre after concerns were raised with him by one resident on behalf of disabled persons using mobility scooters and the like. Cllr Pettitt will aim to include more about this in his next report.

Cllr
Pettitt

8 A1 (31-2021/22)

Members received and considered a question from the SG19 group and received information on a suggestion made by the Hon. Sir Edward Leigh MP, related to the A1. Members expressed support for Sir Edward Leigh's statement to the House of Commons and commented that the removal of roundabouts on the A1 would mean an alternative solution would have to be found, which may well trigger a review of the road and ultimately a case for the realignment of the A1. A Member expressed his support for renaming the road and that this may also lead to more investment or action on its future.

It was proposed, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the Council write to Sir Edward Leigh MP expressing the Council's full support for his statement and the renaming of the A1, but that a proper solution would be to bypass areas such as Sandy and Buckden and to invite him to work with local MP, Richard Fuller to lobby for action.

Admin

9 Street Audit (32-2021/22)

It was noted that this matter had been dealt with under Agenda Item 7.

10 Neighbourhood Development Plan (33-2021/22)

Members received and noted a report from the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. Cllr Gibson reminded Members that the group would be at the Sandy Spring Market to engage with residents and promote the idea and purpose of neighbourhood plans. Cllr Gibson informed the Council that an application had been submitted to obtain grant funding to give technical support in ideas around making the town centre a more flexible space. However, as the Plan is still at an early stage, the funding application might not be successful at this time.

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The Chairman expressed thanks to Cllr Gibson and the Steering Group for all their time and hard work to date.

11 Correspondence to Receive (34-2021/22)

Members received and noted correspondence from the office of the newly elected Police and Crime Commissioner. The Mayor informed Members that a letter had been sent to the new PCC congratulating him on his election and inviting him to meet with Sandy. It was noted that the PCC is due to release a plan and that following this would be a good time for him to meet with the Council.

12 Consultations (35-2021/22)

i) Members received communication from Central Bedfordshire Council on the East West Rail consultation. A Member commented that there were two broad categories with the consultation the Council may wish to consider, firstly the siting of the station and secondly the creation of a development corporation.

Members held a lengthy discussion on the consultation, the four options and the potential benefits a development corporation may have. Such an organisation would be given funding and planning powers, which ultimately help realise some of the Council's ambitions around reviewing and realigning the A1. There does need to be an understanding on how far the government have got looking at such an organisation. There would also be questions about how a Neighbourhood Plan would fit with a development corporation. The Council needs to understand what the aims and objectives of the corporation would be.

It was felt that the route decision had been taken and the Council would not be able to influence a change from Route E at this stage. However, Members expressed their disappointment that the northern route from the centre of Bedford had been chosen. A lot of financial investment was going to be needed, with limited scope for development in Bedford.

It was proposed, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the Council respond to the consultation stating;

- The Council is disappointed that the North route is to be taken and that going through Bedford will be expensive, offering little development opportunity.

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- Out of the four options currently being consulted on, the Council believes that the most southerly route has the most advantages for Sandy, but those advantages are limited.
- The Council supports the creation of a Sandy/St Neots development corporation and that the resources of planning and investment resulting from the corporation are welcome, as long as planning is of a high standard.
- Addressing the physical constraints around Sandy is the only way it can develop. Major investment is needed in the area, in particular the movement of the A1.

- ii) Members noted that Central Bedfordshire Council have extended the temporary road closure to support the safe opening of schools outside Robert Peel until 18th June 2021. A Member commented that the closure was reportedly having a negative effect on other roads around the school and this had been reported to CBC. This should be kept in mind if CBC carry out any further consultation on the closure.
- iii) Members noted that Central Bedfordshire Council are currently running a survey on their Short Breaks Statements for carers until 13th June 2021.
- iv) Members noted that Central Bedfordshire Council are consulting on changes to the educational support and provision for children and young people identified with SEND until 8th July 2021.

13 Leisure Services (36-2021/22)

The Clerk provided an update on discussions held by the Leisure Services Working Group and that communication would continue with Central Bedfordshire on developing proposals for leisure services in Sandy and the Town Council's role within that. A report is due to go to CBC Executive on 8th June and CBC Comms will be issuing a statement to support that report. This will be shared with STC.

14 Reports from Councillors on Outside Bodies (37-2021/22)

- i) Cllr Hewitt introduced her report on the last meeting of the Sandy Centre Group to the Council. The Council agreed to note the report.
- ii) Members received a report from the Town Clerk detailing the Sandy Centre Group's Welcome Back Fund proposals. Members

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Clerk

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expressed their support for the proposals, and it was **RESOLVED** that the Welcome Back Fund proposals as reported be approved and a delivery plan be submitted to Central Bedfordshire Council.

Members thanked the Sandy Centre Group for the work that had gone into coming up with the ideas which are to be submitted.

Town
Clerk /
Cllrs
Gibson
and
Hewitt

15 News Release (38-2021/22)

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

- Council's support of Sir Edward Leigh's statement in the House of Commons.
- Council's response to the East West Rail consultation.

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16 Chairman's Items (39-2021-22)

The Chairman thanked those who arranged and took part in the Sandy Green Wheel walk on 23rd May 2021. It was noted the walk was arranged by Cllr Gibson and that Cllr Knagg had attended along with Katie Barker from the Council office.

17 Date of Next Meeting (40-2021/22)

Meeting of Full Council - Monday 28th June 2021.