

Sandy Town Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Policy, Finance and Resources Committee of Sandy Town Council which was held virtually via Zoom on Monday 26 October 2020 commencing at 7.30pm.

Present: Cllrs N Aldis, P Blaine, J Hewitt, A Hill, W Jackson, R Lock, C Osborne (Chair), M Pettitt, and M Scott

In attendance: Cllrs A Gibson and S Sutton, Mr C Robson (Town Clerk).
One member of the public.

Actions

1 Apologies for absence (30-2020/21)

Apologies were received from Cllr P Sharman, who was experiencing issues connecting to the meeting.

2 Declarations of interest (31-2020/21)

None.

3 Minutes of previous meeting (32-2020/21)

RESOLVED to receive the minutes of the Policy, Finance and Resources Committee held on 14 September 2020 and to approve them as a correct record of proceedings.

4 Public Participation Session (33-2020/21)

There were no questions from members of the public. One Member of the public was present to speak on agenda item 6 – grant applications. The Chairman informed the committee that he intended to take agenda item 6 before item 5, so the matter for which the member of the public was attending could be dealt with first.

5 Grant Application (34-2020/21)

Members received and considered a grant application from Biggles FM. Mr A Waring, a representative of Biggles FM spoke on behalf of the application. He stated that the station had seen its listener numbers and engagement increase during the last six months as a result of the pandemic. Many people had expressed their gratitude that the community station was still in operation and providing valuable support, communication and advice during the pandemic. The station is continuing to operate within COVID19 guidelines.

Members commented that it was a valuable service and had proved particularly valuable during the recent months. It was Proposed and Seconded that a grant of £600.00 be awarded.

A Member asked whether more specific listener data could be provided. Mr Waring said that the technology to access the listener figures (as used by large radio broadcasters) would cost in the region of £10,000. The cost makes gathering such data unfeasible.

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Members noted that Biggleswade Town Council had provided a grant of £1,850 as per the application. However, Biggleswade was a far larger town with a bigger population. It was felt that the proposed £600.00 was more representative of Sandy on this occasion.

The applicant commented that they had also applied to Ofcom for community station funding, but had unfortunately not been successful.

RESOLVED that the Council award Biggles FM a grant of £600.00.

Mr Waring thanked the committee for its support and left the meeting.

6 Financial Reports (35-2020/21)

i) Members considered a balance sheet and detailed financial report showing income and expenditure against the revenue budget for September 2020. Members went through the detailed financial statements page by page. **RESOLVED** to note the balance sheet and detailed financial statement.

ii) Members received a budget overview report for September 2020.

A Member commented that utility rates were quite erratic. The Chairman stated that an explanation was provided in the accompanying notes.

It was noted that there were no further concerns and it was **RESOLVED** to note the budget reports.

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

A Member queried a payment on graffiti removal spray and whether Sandy suffers much from cases of graffiti. The Clerk commented that it did not, but there were instances of graffiti in play areas occasionally.

A Member queried payments made to two different gravediggers. The Clerk commented that the Council has one grave digger it uses, but if he is not available, alternative arrangements have to be made.

A Member asked about money spent on the excavation of a hole. The Clerk confirmed this was in relation to the work undertaken by the streetlight engineer to replace two streetlights.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the schedule.

iv) It was **RESOLVED** that the Chair of Policy Finance and Resources

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check and approve the bank reconciliations and statements.

7 **Audrey Boothby Award (36-2020/21)**

Members considered information on the Audrey Boothby Award. The Chairman confirmed some history as to the Council's decision to make the award. The school has now confirmed details of this year's award recipient. It was noted that a Member of the public had raised a query about the award, including whether it should continue and if so, if it should be increased.

The Chairman summarised that the committee could;

- 1) Stop the contribution for the award.
- 2) Continue with the award and consider if an increase in the amount given should be applied.
- 3) Continue with the award and consider if the name of the award should be changed.

A Member commented that they would not want to see this regular contribution stopped and that the link between the school, community and the Council should be strengthened wherever possible.

It was commented that it was clearly felt that making the donation in the name of Audrey Boothby was appropriate at the time due to all she had done for the community. It would be a pity to change this now and the merits of what she had done for Sandy still stood.

Concern was raised over lack of information about the award's namesake and why the award had been presented, including during the actual presentation. It was noted that the award was for recognising a contribution to the school or community. Members felt that the award should focus more on the wider community contribution and should be increased.

It was proposed, seconded and **RESOLVED** to continue with the Audrey Boothby Award and increase the contribution to £35 for the 2021/22 financial year. That the Clerk contact the school to ask that greater explanation on the award and its purpose is given during the presentation.

It was commented that information on the award should be displayed on the Council's website and social media, and that the recipient of the award could be invited to spend a day with the Council to look at the work undertaken in the town.

8 **Jenkins Pavilion Roof (37-2020/21)**

Members received and considered quotations for work required to the

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Clerk

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roof ends of the Jenkins Pavilion. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the recommendation and that the work be carried out with the Mayor, Chairman and Clerk agreeing the best quote as per Council's Standing Orders.

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9 Summer Planting (38-2020/21)

Members received and considered a report on summer planting for the town centre. A Member commented that the summer floral display was something that the Council received praise for and that he would not like to see the display changed or reduced in any way. Other Members echoed this and commented that the lamppost baskets ensure the displays were spread through the town centre, looked good and received positive feedback from residents.

A Member commented that he would not be opposed to reducing the number of lamppost and hanging baskets in favour of more barrier baskets. The flowers in the lamppost baskets took some time to cascade over the basket. Another Member added that he had been very disappointed with the quality of the lamppost baskets this year, which had stopped flowering by August. He also commented that watering should be done at weekends as well in the hot weather. This was not a problem other neighbouring towns appeared to have and it could be watering, the size of the baskets or the plant mix. Barrier baskets are easier to maintain and control.

Other Members commented that given the weather over the summer and the fact the maintenance team was one member down, they felt the planting looked good and had received positive comments from the public. It was agreed by all Members that additional barrier baskets would be a positive addition.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Council approve option three and that the following be included in the contract;

44 x Planter Lamppost Baskets
11 x Hanging Baskets
4 x Planted flower tower 3 tier

It was **RESOLVED** that additional barrier baskets are purchased from the 2021/22 rolling capital fund. That baskets be placed on railings at the Co-op crossing, outside the raised promenade of shops, outside the library and at the Bedford Road crossing.

Admin

10 Neighbourhood Development Plan (39-2020/21)

Members considered a report on a potential Neighbourhood Development Plan budget for 2021/22. A Member thanked the steering group for a comprehensive report and stated that the Council had

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made a commitment to develop a Neighbourhood Plan and must make sure the steering group have the resources available to do it. It was proposed and seconded that the recommendations within the report be approved.

RESOLVED that a Neighbourhood Plan budget of £10,000 be included in the 2021/22 financial year budget. That the funding be provided via a transfer from the Rolling Capital Fund in 2021/22.

Town Clerk/
Chair

11 Mobile Telephone Contract (40-2020/21)

Members received and considered a recommendation from the Human Resources committee on the provision of a staff mobile phone. It was noted that the matter was discussed at length by the Human Resources committee and it was proposed and seconded to accept the recommendations within the report.

RESOLVED to enter into a mobile phone contract in the current financial year for the provision of an administration team mobile phone at a cost of no more than £25.00 per month.

Admin

RESOLVED to include the provision of a mobile phone for the outdoor team in the 2021/22 financial year budget.

Town Clerk

A Member queried whether a policy would be forthcoming on use of the phone. The Clerk informed the committee that there was a mobile phone policy within the Council's employee handbook, this could be adapted and would be reviewed by the HR committee in due course. The committee are in the process of reviewing all policies within the handbook.

Cllr Sutton joined the meeting.

12 2021/22 Revenue Budget Report (41-2020/21)

Members received and considered a summary report on the Council's revenue budget and potential budgetary increases/decreases for the next financial year.

The committee went through the report page by page and made the following amendments to the recommended budget amounts contained within the report;

Pg 47 – (401 – 4001/4002) Members discussed the salary budget line, in which a 3% increase for the next financial year had been advised by the Council's accountants, who act as accountant to the National Association of Local Councils. A Member said this was unrealistic and increases should be no more than 1%. The Chairman pointed out that the impact on the actual budget was very minimal due to the salary

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award in the current year being significantly lower than anticipated before COVID19. Other Members commented that there was no guarantee that an increase would be as low as 1% and the Council must be responsible and prepare for a larger increase, especially as professional advice has been received. Unions were already making their cases for increases higher than 1%. Other Members commented that a larger increase could well be awarded in recognition of work undertaken by the sector during COVID19. Members agreed to leave the 2021/22 budget as recommended in the document.

Pg 48 – (401 – 4003) The estimated current year expenditure for NIC is to be lowered to £17,000 due to a period of time with an employee on unpaid leave.

Pg 49 – (402 – 4012) The recommended reduction in the water rates budget for 10 Cambridge Road was reviewed and considered unwise. The lower usage during the current year does not provide an accurate picture due to a long period with minimal staff operating from the office and no public or councillor use. Agreed to leave the budget at £800.

Pg 50 – (402 - 4021) The phone budget will need to be increased by up to £600 to account for the two agreed mobile phones. Actual cost will be dependent on contract obtained.

Pg 50 – (402 – 4023) The recommended budget for printing and stationery can be lowered by £500 to £1000. This is because printing costs no longer come from this budget line and are allocated to photocopier costs instead.

Pg 51 – (402 – 4027) Due to the agreement of a new IT contract and savings made, it was agreed to lower the 2021/22 budget by £500 to £3,500.

Pg 52 – (402 – 4050) It was noted that tourism income was reduced to zero due to uncertainties over COVID19. Members felt that tourism expenditure, which mainly covers Safford trips, should also be reduced to £100.

Pg 57 – (405 – 4014) It was noted that the Council should get a reduction in its streetlight electricity costs now that 45% of lighting stock is LED. The Clerk is awaiting a response from the Streetlight engineer and UKPN.

Pg 58 – A Member queried the tool shed in the cemetery and what it is used for. This is currently used for storage. It was agreed the building would be reviewed and a report brought back to a future meeting.

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Pg 62 – (500 - 1241) It was noted that the 2020/21 income from the football club would be lower due to the agreed reduction as a result of COVID19.

Pg 63 – (501 - 4014) A Member questioned the electricity costs for the banks pavilion, which appeared high for a storage building. The Clerk explained that the pavilion is used regularly by the clubs that operate from there, who often have to work on machinery and items within the storage area. There is also a toilet in the facility.

Pg 69 – (602 - 4702) Members discussed the community events budget line and agreed it should be left in place in the hope that the 2020/21 planned events can be run in 2021/22 instead. The community will want some positive events when guidance allows, and the Council should be prepared for this.

The Chairman thanked Members for their input and reminded all those present that this was very much a first draft that will be developed over the next few committee meetings. Scale of Charges and capital will be considered at the next meeting.

13 Chairman's Items (42-2020/21)

There were no Chairman's items.

14 Date of next meeting (43-2020/21)

It was noted that the next Policy, Finance and Resources Committee meeting will be on Monday 7th December 2020.