

## **Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting for the Parish of Sandy, Bedfordshire, held on Monday 3 April 2017 at Sandy Upper School commencing at 7.30pm.**

**Present:** Cllr C Osborne (Town Mayor as Chairman of the meeting) together with 10 Town Councillors, 3 Central Bedfordshire Councillors and 38 members of the public.

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Hill and Sparrow, Mr K Lynch and Mrs B Arnold.

### **2. Minutes of the 2016 Annual Town Meeting**

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Monday 25 April 2016, which had been circulated to those in attendance prior to the meeting being opened, were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **3. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

### **4. Town Mayor's Awards for Services to the Community**

There were a large number of nominations for the Mayor's Youth Award last year, but this year there were no entries put forward which was disappointing. The Mayor was hopeful that some suggestions be put forward for next year to reflect the good works that the young people of Sandy are involved in.

For the Mayor's Citizens Award, this was a difficult decision to make and three people were invited along on the evening. After much consideration, this Award was presented to Mick Reynolds. Mick was nominated by Ken Cushman and Cllr Nigel Aldis. Mick has helped to organise many clubs and sporting activities over the years, including the Sandy Cricket and Bowls Clubs, the Sandy Historical Research Group and the Sandy Village Hall Committee. He is also an active member of Probus as well as other local organisations. Mick is always 'hands on' with any physical work that is needed, as well as spending many hours completing paper work which enables these various clubs to function effectively.

This year certificates were also presented to Liz Allaway and Chris Page, as runners up. Liz was nominated by Robert Cooper. She is a very caring person who goes out of her way to brighten the day of others. Chris Page was nominated by Danny Ward. He has helped run Sandy Fire Cadets for

over 10 years, which has produced two Lord Lieutenants Cadets. The time and effort spent on planning and co-ordinating the activities for the cadets is substantial. This includes organising the cadets' participation in events such as the Christmas Lights Switch on, the Sandy Carnival, school events and station open days. The Cadets also help with school visits about fire safety and visits to the station by other local community groups.

The Mayor's Community Group award was presented to all the staff at Tescos in Sandy, nominated by Dorothy Oakley. Dorothy's brother, Bob Garner, is a double amputee and visits Tescos every day in his mobility scooter. He recently had a heart attack and was admitted to hospital for several days. On his return home, a staff member knocked at the door to enquire as to whether he was alright and if he and his wife needed any shopping.

This news was placed on Facebook and received 558 likes and over 70 positive comments, quoting other instances of excellent customer service. The Manager of Tescos, who was on holiday at the time, saw this on Facebook and sent a personal message to enquire how Mr Garner was doing.

## **5. Reports from Elected Representatives:**

### **i) Town Council – Cllr Colin Osborne**

On behalf of Sandy Town Council it is my pleasure to introduce our report to the electorate of Sandy and Beeston after a very busy year.

We had a very successful day at the beginning of December when our Christmas lights were switched on. Many organisations had stalls to raise funds and the weather was extremely kind resulting in approximately 3,000 people turning out to support this festive event.

Sandy Town Council is committed to the continued support of this very worthwhile event and providing the Christmas lights for the benefit of the local community and we look forward to this year's day which will be on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2017. The Switch-on Event is organised by the 'Friends of Sandy Christmas Lights' group, which relies heavily on volunteers. If you are interested in helping organise this event by joining the group's committee or volunteering on the day please contact the Council Offices, where we would be very glad to hear from you.

Although we had a settled council in the first year of the current four-year term, we did lose Cllr Quick during the past year who resigned for personal reasons, and Cllr Knagg was co-opted to fill the vacancy. In addition, Cllr Ali has been on leave of absence for some months. I would like to thank all councillors for the time they voluntarily give to our town.

In agreeing the Budget for 2017/18 the Council reviewed and reduced budgets across the board wherever possible but for the fourth year we received no mitigation funding from Central Beds Council. Despite this we managed to keep our precept to £539k – an increase of £4.88 per year on a Band D property or 9p per week.

The Town Council does not rely solely on its precept to fund projects and activities and actively pursues grant and support funding wherever possible. The Council has, in the last year, been successful in obtaining grant funding to refurbish the War Memorial and work will commence in the next couple of months. Similarly, funding has been obtained from CBC's Market Town Regeneration Fund to improve the High Street and Market Square and again work will be starting very shortly on this. In addition, grant funding has been made available to show Sandy's story in stone through the Mosaic Designs project. The project has made a strong start and will be completed by March 2018.

The Town Council has helped various sports and community groups in the town via actively supporting Section 106 grant applications. In total £18,739 has been secured in the last year.

Progress on our cemetery extension has been slow and although planning permission has been received we still await the start of the archaeological dig which is a planning requirement. Similarly, the acquisition of a large allotment site is no further forward although we have been working with CBC officers to provide some allotments within the Beeston Green Orchard project site.

A lot of time and effort has gone into responding to CBC's draft Local Plan and 'Call for Sites' to meet housing demands across the area. Several opportunities for residents to respond to suggested proposals have been arranged during the past year. The Town Council recently commissioned a benchmarking exercise in the town centre to ascertain the views of residents that will assist the Council in its thinking and planning for the future.

Regular quarterly meetings are now held by myself, the Deputy Mayor and the Town Clerk with our three CBC Councillors so that we are all

working together for the benefit of our community. Similarly, there have been several meetings this year to raise local concerns with our MP, Alistair Burt.

I was delighted last May to welcome the Mayor of our Twin Town Malaunay to Sandy and Councillor Pettitt will be representing the town this year at the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of twinning in Malaunay.

Councillors have made visits to our local fire station during the year to meet our Fire Cadets and see them undertake a training exercise and we recently visited the Army Cadet Attachment in Sunderland Road. Both these organisations – and indeed many others – are a credit to the town.

The Mayor's charity fund this year has been donated to Canine Partners who train dogs to help those with disabilities. A resident of Sandy has a trained dog and one is currently being trained by a resident of Potton. Similarly, funding is being provided to purchase a defibrillator for our recreation ground in Bedford Road. Over £1,000 has been raised and may I personally thank all those who have attended the mayor's charity events or made donations. It is truly appreciated.

May I thank, too, all the organisations for the warm welcome my wife and I have received when we have visited them and thank them for all their kind invitations and hospitality.

## **ii) Central Bedfordshire (CBC)**

Cllrs Maudlin, Stock and Smith had provided a written report which was made available to those attending the meeting and which presented an overview of Central Bedfordshire Council's work during the year 2016/17.

Cllr Stock pointed out that all three CBC councillors were happy to be contacted regarding anything mentioned in that report or about any other concerns they may have, and that they can be visited at Sandy library on every second Friday, or the last Saturday of the month, between 10 am to 12 noon.

An update was given on the 73 Bus, which has now been reinstated and is going back down Engayne Avenue. This is with thanks to the efforts made by Paul Dodge – Central Beds Transport Manager, the residents of Sandy, and Central Beds and Sandy Town Councillors.

Cllr Maudlin has been working with two businesses in Sandy Market Square as part of their High Street Regeneration Scheme whereby their shop fronts will be refurbished in the near future.

Cottage Road and part of Pym's Way footway is in the Structural Maintenance programme for the upcoming financial year, however no date for this has been confirmed as yet.

Cllr Smith reported that the consultation on the Black Cat roundabout and Caxton Gibbet was still ongoing and invited residents to put forward any suggestions and comments that they have. The consultation documents are available online and also in the local library.

Cllr Maudlin reiterated the point that residents are welcome to contact them and their contact details can be found on the Central Bedfordshire Council website.

## **6. Resolutions and Questions**

No resolutions had been received before the meeting.  
The Mayor opened up the meeting for questions.

**i)** Cllr Aldis asked, with the aftermath of the recent Storm Doris, when will many of the drains in Sandy be dealt with as there is a worry that this will lead to localised flooding in the future. CBC Cllr Smith responded to this by saying that Central Beds Council is embarking on checking on all gullies during this financial year and reporting on which of those will need further attention.

**ii)** Cllr Aldis asked how the Central Bedfordshire Council Local Plan will deal with the needs of housing within Sandy. CBC Cllr Smith answered by saying that each planning application is taken on its own merits, but Central Beds Council also have to take into account the National Planning Policy. Central Bedfordshire Council have put a great deal of effort into their Community Plan being acceptable to the locality and considering the needs of the community.

Several questions had been received before the meeting, and the Mayor thanked those who had done so.

**iii)** A question had been received in advance of the meeting: Heavy goods vehicles going through Merlin Drive are a cause of concern for Fallowfield residents. Can large notices be installed at the end of Merlin Drive stating 'No HGV vehicles except residential deliveries'?

Sandy Town Council unfortunately has no power or the relevant authority to act when it comes to highways issues. Matters related to traffic and highways come under Central Bedfordshire Council, Highways England and when appropriate, the Bedfordshire Police Force. The Town Council does however take this seriously and continues to work with those authorities who have power in such matters.

Cllr Cole has been working closely with Cllr Stock, who continues to push for resolutions to residents' concerns. These councillors will be arranging a site visit and will continue to put pressure on Central Beds Council regarding suitable signage as well as writing to local businesses to advise and persuade drivers to use the correct or alternative routes.

**iv)** A question had been received in advance of the meeting: The Fallowfield estate is polluted by dog waste, especially on the recreation ground. Some owners let dogs urinate on people's gardens. Can a letter be sent to residents telling them that it is not acceptable for their pets to foul our gardens?

The Town Council recognises that there is a problem with dog waste and is taking what steps it can to address the matter. The solution to dog waste and dog behaviour ultimately lies with responsible dog ownership and ensuring that there are enough dog bins, at the right locations, for dog owners to utilise.

Working with Central Beds Council, we have recently installed two additional dog waste bins at points in Fallowfield and will continue to monitor the area for other locations which may assist in tackling the issue.

The Council is looking to promote responsible dog ownership and will host a 'Dog Awareness' event in the summer of 2017. Cllr Maudlin added that there are fines of £1,000 that can be enforced but this needs someone to report these incidents and submit them to Central Beds Council.

**v)** A question had been received in advance of the meeting: Please see if you can raise the funds to finish fencing off the field in Osprey Close. The lack of fencing leaves the site vulnerable.

The Town Clerk is currently collecting quotes for the completion of fencing at the Osprey Close side of the Fallowfield recreation ground. The matter is due to be brought before the Council for consideration.

The Council recently approved the relocation of a mobile CCTV camera to focus on the Fallowfield Recreation ground and play area as part of its efforts to tackle anti-social behaviour. The Council has worked closely with

Maple Tree School on the matter and it is anticipated that the CCTV will be active within the next couple of weeks.

**vi)** A question had been received in advance of the meeting: What plans does the Council intend to take to represent the concerns of the residents in the light of suggestions that A&E and Maternity services could be hived off to Luton and Dunstable or Milton Keynes Hospitals?

Representatives of the Town Council have attended two recent consultation events on the Sustainability and Transformation Plan and have reported back to Full Council on the proposals. The Town Council has reviewed the proposals and intends to discuss the matter again at a meeting of the Full April 2017.

**vii)** A question had been received in advance of the meeting: Can the Council please detail what practical steps have been taken to engage with the Sustainability and Transformation Plan currently reviewing the long term future of Bedford Hospital.

As a result of the Council's discussions a submission was made to the Sustainability and Transformation Plan consultation stating the Council's position and detailing its concerns about the proposals. Following the meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> April, further communications will be submitted and followed up.

The Council has made Alistair Burt, MP aware of this and asked that he speaks to relevant parties to voice the Council's concerns.

**viii)** A question had been received in advance of the meeting: Does the Council agree this would be a retrograde step that should be strongly resisted?

The Council recognises the importance of Bedford Hospital and the services it provides for Sandy and the surrounding area. The Council agrees that any downgrading of Bedford Hospital would be a retrograde step and should be avoided.

The Council has clearly communicated this to the consultation and will continue to engage with the Sustainability Transformation Plan to reinforce the Council's message.

**ix)** A question had been received in advance of the meeting: Who will be paying for all street furnishing and mosaic art work that is proposed for the town centre?

Proposed improvements to the Town Centre are via Central Bedfordshire

Council's Regeneration Match Fund, a project which will see improvements to town centres across Central Bedfordshire Council's area.

The Town Council and Central Bedfordshire Council are working closely on the project, which will be completed by March 2018. The project encompasses public art work, new signage, street furniture, a community covered stand and decluttering of unnecessary signage.

Central Bedfordshire Council committed funds to support Town Councils in improving town centres. Town Councils were invited to apply to Central Bedfordshire Council to receive funds for improvement projects.

The funding for the project comes from Central Bedfordshire Council and is matched by the Town Council via on-going maintenance of assets, project time by the Clerk and other officers, volunteer (community input) time and some financial investment, such as the Benchmark Survey which collected valuable data on the Town Centre.

**x)** A question had been received in advance of the meeting: The Town is still in need of allotments. Is the Council any closer to securing an allotment site?

Sandy Town Council has been working with Central Beds Council to secure allotments in Beeston as part of an affordable housing scheme. Central Beds Council are currently working with Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity to draw up the relevant plans for a planning submission, which we expect to see shortly. This will provide some allotment plots and a community orchard.

The Council recognises this isn't a long-term solution to satisfying the demand for allotments within the town and will continue to look to secure other suitable sites where opportunities arise. The immediate priority is to work with Central Beds Council towards securing the success of the proposed Beeston project.

**xi)** A question had been received in advance of the meeting: Does the Council have any plans about the future of the skate park?

The Town Council is currently working with Central Bedfordshire Council to carry out improvement works to play parks within Sandy. Following Easter, the Town Council and Central Beds Council will be asking for the public's opinions on Sandy's play areas with a view to carrying out long and short term improvements.

The start of these improvements will be seen by October 2017 following upcoming consultation and tender processes.

The skatepark is not included in this scope of work, which concentrates on improving the play value of our play parks. Joint thinking with Central Beds Council, who own Biggleswade Skate Park, is needed in the future and can be looked at following the completion of the current play park improvements.

There were no other questions, however a Town Councillor wished to praise the Town Mayor for completing the Sandy 10 Run for the twelfth consecutive year, for which he has raised a great deal of money for chosen charities.

The Mayor closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.