

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting for the Parish of Sandy, Bedfordshire, held on Monday 8 April 2019 at Sandy Town Council Chamber, 10 Cambridge Road, Sandy SG19 1JE, commencing at 7.30pm.

Present: Cllr M Scott (Town Mayor as Chairman of the meeting) together with 9 Town Councillors, Chris Robson (Town Clerk), 2 Central Bedfordshire Councillors and 51 members of the public.

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Cole, Knagg, Leach, Pettitt, and Thompson and CBC Cllr Stock, and Chief Superintendent David Boyle.

2. Minutes of the 2018 Annual Town Meeting

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Monday 14 May 2018, 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

A Member of the public commented that at last year's Annual Town Meeting, the Police representative – Chief Superintendent David Boyle, gave a very long presentation on the importance of the Police liaising with the local community in Sandy to establish concerns and priorities. The question was then asked:

Now that the Police have had a lengthy period in which to do this, can they reveal to us the concerns and priorities for Sandy policing which they have established and tell us what they are doing to address these matters?

The question was answered by the Clerk on behalf of Chief Superintendent Boyle:

The police are continuing to hold quarterly priority setting meetings where they take input from representatives of different areas. The Sandy priorities set for the next quarter are focused on drug use and dealing, which has seen an increase in Sandy.

Chief Superintendent Boyle has responded that the approach to tackling the issue of drugs in our communities is multi-layered and complex. The role of the community teams is to provide a visible deterrent by gathering intelligence and targeting those who are dealing drugs locally. This relies on the community being willing to report this information to the police,

either directly through online reporting to the police or on 101, or indirectly through our partners at Crime Stoppers.

Chief Superintendent Boyle is happy to come to the town again and talk to residents about their concerns.

A further question was asked in connection with crime and policing:

Three pubs in Sandy have been targeted recently. What is being done to try and prevent such occurrences in the future, especially given that the Police are obviously underfunded?

The Clerk confirmed that he can take Chief Superintendent Boyle up on his offer to meet and put that question to him.

4. Presentation of Town Mayor's Awards for Services to the Community

For the Mayor's Citizens Award, the winners were Mr and Mrs Wilmott. Every year Mr and Mrs Wilmott adorn their house and garden with beautiful Christmas decorations. People from far and wide make a special trip to see their wonderful display. They raise thousands of pounds for charity and therefore deserve some recognition for the wonderful effort they make every Christmas.

The Highly Commended runner up in this category went to Alison Coats of Sandy Children's Centre for being the kindest and most helpful person, who goes above and beyond for both parents and babies. She is always very welcoming and friendly and offers a sympathetic ear, cups of tea, allows people to vent and generally supports and encourages a vulnerable group of women – new mothers, and makes everything better. Alison is amazing, is a credit to the Sandy community and is loved by all!

The Mayor's Community Group award was presented to Richard Scoot on behalf of Sandy Asahi Shotokan Karate Club, as joint winner in this category. This group has been running for 29 years – meeting 52 weeks a year, even in the holidays. Its teams of instructors teach discipline and skill in a fun and inclusive way. They are kind, caring and professional and combine fun and fitness into this ancient martial art, making karate accessible to all. Every student – whatever their ability or needs, is treated with respect and encouragement and it is a great place to make friends and get fit. Many parents have commented on their children growing in confidence as a direct result of attending the group.

Students attend from nearby towns and villages which creates links between these places. It has also put Sandy on the map both nationally and internationally, and Richard Scoot is Chief Instructor for SKAI England, making Sandy the UK HQ for this international organisation. Host weekend seminars twice a year bring students from both the UK and Europe to Sandy, with students from Sandy also able to attend seminars in Europe. The club has taught many local children and adults over the last 29 years, and some former students are now bringing their own children along to the club, which is a great testament to all the positives this club has to offer!

The other joint winner in this category was Biggleswade Athletic Club, who unfortunately were not present on the night to collect their certificate. The Club has been in Sandy for 16 years, moving to the Sports Centre and then to the all-weather athletics track. There are regular events including the inter-county championships. The Club has taken over the management and maintenance of the track and has overseen its recent refurbishment, keeping it as a high-quality facility run by volunteers. The Club was the first of its kind to be awarded the Sport England Clubmark accreditation in the UK, meaning it demonstrates that it can offer young athletes a safe, effective and child-friendly environment to train, along with a high level of coaching competence. There are currently 20 trained and accredited coaches who get the best out of participants – all for no charge.

The club has grown to over 300 members coming from near and far – 200 seniors and over 100 juniors – who train and compete in track and field events, cross country, junior parkrun and sports hall (winter) competitions. The club prides itself on being friendly, lively and supportive, catering for all standards within the local area. The club and its volunteers has brought a great service to the local community when health and fitness is so vital, as well as enhancing the name of Sandy to all those who visit to support events and see the club in action.

The Young Person's Award for 2019 was presented to Thomas Forshaw who always provides support for his best friend Olli Barclay who has Cerebral Palsy. Thomas and Olli have been friends for many years and Thomas has always supported Olli in many ways. He carries and wheels his bag to and from school every day and recently Olli has required a wheelchair, so Thomas has also been pushing him to and from school – from the other end of Sandy. He does all of this with a constant smile on

his face and is a remarkable young man and an amazing friend. Thomas' support and friendship is truly humbling.

The Highly Commended runner up in this category was Mathew and Niamh Fielding for all the money that they have raised for Wood Green, Luna Rescue and St John's Hospice, as well as participating in the Christmas Shoe Box appeal and the Great British Spring Clean.

5. Reports from Elected Representatives:

i) Town Council – Cllr Michael Scott

On behalf of Sandy Town Council, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the Annual Town Meeting for residents of Sandy and Beeston after another very busy and challenging year.

2018 was a particularly poignant year as it marked 100 years since the end of WW1. In November the community came together to pay its respects and commemorate the centenary of the end of WW1. A series of WW1 talks organised by the Town Council proved popular and residents of Sandy showed their support by donating towards the Town Council's lamppost Poppy appeal, which raised over £500 for the poppy appeal charity. The lamppost poppies were so well received that the Council has agreed to repeat these in 2019.

Residents made Sandy proud by turning out in force to support the town's annual remembrance parade. Later that day the community joined together in an act of shared remembrance which saw a touching tribute and beacon lighting event take place in the market square. The event, which was organised by the Town Council in partnership with the Royal British Legion and St Swithun's Church, combined letters from soldiers and poems which were read out by the Army & Air Cadets. The community then joined in singing war time songs in a moving and enjoyable event in honour of all those who sacrificed so much on our behalf. In 2019 the Town Council are to become more involved in the annual parade and will be working closely with the Royal British Legion to continue this important act of remembrance.

I must also thank Sandy Chamber of Trade who funded the new flag pole at Fayne's Corner, which will help the town mark important national and local dates and events in the years to come.

I strongly believe that partnerships are key to the future success of our town and going forward, the Council shall continue to build relationships at local and national levels to ensure Sandy's interests are clearly heard.

In December, many of you will have enjoyed what has become a successful annual event in the town, the Sandy Christmas Light Switch On. This year the Friends of Sandy Christmas Lights formally separated from the Council by becoming their own independent charity. However, the Council will continue to work closely with the group to ensure Sandy always has a light switch on to remember. The aim of the Friends of Sandy Christmas Lights is to run the light switch on event, with support from Sandy Town Council. The Council will continue to provide the town's Market Square and High Street Christmas Lights. In 2019 we will be renewing the Christmas light contract and focusing on getting more enhancements without increasing our budget.

Regular quarterly meetings continue – attended by me as Mayor, the Deputy Mayor – Cllr Martin Pettitt, and the Town Clerk – with our three CBC Councillors so that we are all working together for the benefit of our community. It has been particularly pleasing to see the advancement of improvements to the Winchester Road area following the joined-up work of Central Bedfordshire Council and Grand Union Housing, which the Council is pleased to actively support.

In 2017/18 the Council spent a lot of time inputting into Central Bedfordshire Council's Local Plan process and developing its own Community Plan. During the last year the Council has been faced with several other strategic decisions by different organisations which it has sought to influence on behalf of Sandy. Recently the Council engaged with the East West Rail Link consultations and stressed the importance of keeping a station in Sandy, prioritising improvements that could be brought to our existing station.

The lack of action on issues around the A1 continues to frustrate Members of the Council and this has been a matter we have continued to push for action on from our MP - the Rt Hon Alistair Burt, Highways England and the Department for Transport. As a Council we are currently focusing on the proposed average speed camera scheme and pushing for this to be implemented as soon as possible.

During the year, the Council supported and worked with the Sandy Historical Research Group to help submit an application to have Sandye Place Academy recognised as an asset of community value. The Council

has continued to work with Central Bedfordshire Councillors to push for the protection of Sandye Place Academy as a protected facility for our community. Following the recent threat to community use of facilities at the Secondary school, the Council are placing pressure on Central Bedfordshire Council to commit to leisure investment in the town and ensure Sandy has the facilities it needs and deserves.

The Council also worked with the Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity and Central Bedfordshire Council to launch the walking route of the Sandy Green Wheel. The Council has committed to continue supporting the development of the Wheel in 2019/20 to try and reach the goal of it becoming fully cyclable.

In agreeing the Budget for 2019/20 the Council reviewed and reduced budgets across the board wherever possible but despite this we had to increase our precept to £580k – an increase of £4.36p per year on a Band D property or 8p per week. The Council was able to make savings of approximately £6,500 by re-negotiating or entering into new service contracts. However, the need to increase funding for the ongoing maintenance of streetlighting along with legal provision and contract increases led to an overall increase in the precept.

The Town Council does not rely solely on its precept to fund projects and activities and actively pursues grants and support funding wherever possible. During the last financial year, the Council was successful in obtaining grant funding for new play equipment and funding for the much-needed refurbishment of the Scout Hut roof. Town centre railings were painted, directional finger posts installed, and car park directional line marking done via funding from Central Bedfordshire Council. Highway signage and dropped kerbing was also installed in some areas of the town following a successful rural match fund application.

New play park equipment has been installed in recreation areas at The Limes, Beeston Green, Fallowfield, Bedford Road and Sunderland Road. The funds for the new play park equipment were secured from Section 106 grant funding, which meant the Council was restricted in how much new equipment it was able to invest in due to the level of funds available but worked hard to make sure each park in Sandy received new play items. The Council wished to install some new quality equipment with high play value across all sites in the town.

Archaeological excavations at the cemetery extension site were completed during the last financial year and work has now moved on to the development of the new council depot and the cemetery car park, which are due to be finished within three months. The archaeological work was a planning requirement of the new cemetery and was work the Council had to commit to. A full report from the archaeological contractors in line with planning conditions is due and this will shed more light on Roman Sandy.

The Mayor's charity funds this year has been to support organisations in the town who do splendid work. Over £2,000 has been raised and may I personally thank all those who have attended the Mayor's Charity events or made donations or supported the events in any way – it is truly appreciated. The Mayor's charity has also funded the installation of a new defibrillator to be located at Beeston Green.

I would also like to express my thanks, to all the organisations for the warm welcome that myself and my wife have received when we visited them, and we thank each organisation for their kind invitations and hospitality.

ii) Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) – Sandy Ward Councillors Caroline Maudlin and Peter Smith

Cllr Maudlin spoke first. Councillor Maudlin was delighted to see so many Sandy residents at the meeting and added her congratulations to all those who had won awards, saying that it made her and her colleagues proud to be Sandy ward members. The CBC report which has been produced is 10 pages long and is available via the Sandy Town Council website or if anyone would like a paper copy, they should contact Cllr Maudlin and she will be able to get one to you.

Cllr Maudlin reminded everyone that they hold Council surgeries on every second Friday and every last Saturday of the month – between 10 am and 12 noon in Sandy library, but added that they are also available by phone or email. Please visit the CBC website for Councillor details.

It has been a very exciting year for Sandy, and the two Councils (Sandy Town Council and Central Beds Council) have been working very well as a team to get things done. Over the last year, money has been spent cleaning the streets in Sandy, replacing and adding new bins in the town as well as providing funding for the Italian restaurant Peccoro to expand, which will boost their business and provide the public with a good place to eat within the town. The mosaics around the town have now all been finished, and these portray our history within Sandy, and also provide

links with Potton and Biggleswade, where the same project has been carried out to depict historical facts also within those towns. Sandy Green Wheel has now been completed and there was a very well attended open day last September which coincided with the Bedfordshire Walking Festival and was enjoyed by all, some walking the shorter route, and others the longer one. There is still more work being done to get more achieved including the completion of the cycleway and it will be a while before the whole of the Green Wheel can be cycled around.

When any issues are raised, CBC Councillors then speak to relevant officers in order to try and progress matters and keep going until something has been achieved. Councillors are still also working on getting more money and funding for different projects within Sandy.

£200,000 has been allocated for the Winchester Road area to create additional parking, and the second phase is to take down disused garages in the area which should make a big difference. The event highlighting the Winchester Road regeneration plan held in the Village Hall was well attended.

The new East-West Rail link is a huge concern, as we don't yet know which route the line is going to take. CBC councillors are passionate about keeping the train station in Sandy, but at the moment we are in the hands of the current consultation process. It is hoped however that the new line will bring new development to the town.

Paths have been completed at Pym's Road and Cottage Road, and others will be done, however if other work needs to be done first, for example any utility repairs, this will happen before footpaths are repaired.

There has been a consultation on air quality around the A1 in Sandy, as this is a big area of concern. It is the hope that the A1 will be moved as its location causes various problems for Sandy, however, it is up to the community as to what they feel about this issue. Heavy lorries travelling through Beeston has been of considerable concern and whilst there is now restriction through Orchard Road, Councillors are working hard to get signage from the A1 and are still trying to persuade Highways England to do this.

In the past year, there has been a passionate response from the public regarding the potential closure of Sandy Leisure Centre. CBC councillors apologised on behalf of Central Beds Council for the poor communication which they found equally frustrating, but the main thing is that the centre will remain open.

A member of the public raised the issue regarding HGVs travelling at speed through the town centre, and if anything could be done about this. Cllr Maudlin responded that there cannot be an HGV ban through the town as they need to have access to Potton and surrounding towns and villages. She did encourage all those who have concerns regarding speeding through the town to join the Speed Watch group, and also to make a note of any lorries that are seen speeding.

Within the report that the CBC councillors have produced, there is a lot of detail regarding potholes and community safety, so please take a look at the full report if you can.

Cllr Smith then spoke about the Cheering Volunteering initiative which Caroline is heavily involved in. He added that a good example of the great work that people carry out as volunteers within their community was witnessed tonight and it is fantastic that their efforts have been recognised. Central Bedfordshire Council host a large event in Dunstable every year to recognise the efforts of volunteers within the area and he reminded everyone to please nominate anyone they feel is worthy of recognition for next year's awards.

Cllr Smith then went on to talk about the libraries within Central Bedfordshire. We have the best libraries – Sandy being one of these - within the county and also that many libraries in Hertfordshire and Northamptonshire are closing, but Central Bedfordshire Council have not closed any libraries and indeed they are thriving. Within the libraries are various clubs and activities for both children and adults. CBC believe that libraries provide a vital service within the community and they will be protected in the future as far as possible.

Cllr Smith concluded by saying that CBC councillors are here to support the Town Council with their meetings and are always looking for ideas for new projects and housing for infrastructure in an attempt to continue to keep Sandy relevant and on the map.

6. Resolutions and Questions

The Mayor then asked for any questions which had been submitted:

Q: In January, the Town Council debated the idea of a continental market to be held over the weekend of 27th and 28th April 2019. The idea was not debated in February, but at the meeting in April, it had gone from a French/continental market to a specialised market where alcohol would be sold. Can the Council please consider whether the provision of cider and

craft beer will impact on local pubs – especially the William Peel who are also holding their beer festival that weekend?

A: This was done in good faith and the feedback received from surveys carried out suggested that markets were one of the things that people wanted to see in Sandy. The problem with the actual date has highlighted the need for a more joined up approach and the idea of creating a centralised events calendar for Sandy will go to the next Town Council meeting.

The market to be held on the weekend of 27th/28th April was originally intended to be a French market, but unfortunately the organisers cancelled. We had already started advertising this and we were keen to keep some form of market in the town for that weekend. Another organisation then approached the Council with a request to hold a World Village market. The focus of this market should be on crafts, clothes, jewellery and food products. The organiser has been contacted to ensure that this is the case and that new advertising is issued. They have agreed to remove the alcoholic element of the event and will review next week to see if it will still be viable based on the number of traders present.

In the meantime, adverts about this market have been taken down. The Council was not aware of the beer festival at the William Peel being held on that same weekend and a calendar of events may help avoid such clashes in the future, as well as allowing us to share and publicise events within the town. We can share events on our What's on page of our website and our social media pages.

In response to the Council not knowing that there was a beer festival at the William Peel, several members of the public commented that the William Peel has its own website where events are advertised, and that this festival is always on at the same time each year, and the 'Casket' publication that is delivered to the local information office at the Town Council also contains this information. It was also pointed out that all money raised from this event goes towards a children's charity.

Q: How is it that the Queen's Head public house, or indeed any other pub, are not allowed to have any customers drinking outside their premises, but the Council has allowed the street food market to run in the car park outside the pub once a month?

A: The street food market to be run on the second Friday of the month was given approval on a trial basis and the event can be reviewed, including any concerns raised, as it progresses. This will include any

issues over waste and littering. The Council hoped that in approving the request to hold the market, this would provide more activity in the town centre and help bring people in – for example commuters coming from the train station, as well as people from the locality and further afield. This idea has seemed very popular based on social media interaction.

The organiser of this event has been made aware of concerns raised. They have suggested that it may be possible to have a local pub provide a bar at their street food event. The event will be checked by Central Beds Council and a charge will be made for entry. Stalls will run alongside the wall, with their backs along the fence. Barriers will fence the small area off and the gateway to the pub will be left clear. Public toilets will be open for this and the other market event and organisers have been asked to direct attendees to use these.

We are limited with areas we can hold such markets and the car park represents the only town centre area we have control over. It has been our intention to help bring activity to the town centre, which has been supported by many people within Sandy.

The Clerk added that he hoped that such initiatives would help boost local businesses and to get people to come to Sandy, and to keep Sandy relevant and thriving.

CBC Cllr Peter Smith made the point that in his experience of the pub industry, the best thing you can do to bring more business into the town is to run events like this. He cited the Cambridge beer festival as an example of this where during that week, all pubs and businesses within that area benefit hugely from the event.

The response from the Queens Head was that no-one consulted with them on the matter, and the first thing they knew about it was when it had all been decided.

The William Peel representative added to this by saying that their beer festival is all done for charity and they are concerned that such events will be detrimental, and feedback will be given to the Council after the event – positive or negative. They are also holding a cider festival in July and a music festival in September, so they would like reassurance that this situation will not occur at those times.

The Mayor thanked the William Peel pub for providing the Council with that feedback after the event, which will be considered. Establishing a joined-up event calendar will help avoid clashing events in the future.

Q: Feeling quite dubious about the East-West Rail link, it is heartening to know that the Council are in favour of keeping our station where it is in Sandy. In an attempt to prevent any service through the station deteriorating, can the Council confirm that they will press to keep an equivalent service to the one we have now?

A: We would also like that to be the case – that Sandy station remains where it is and that the service is as good as it is currently. We believe, and have been told, that the station to the north will be far enough from Sandy for this to not be detrimental to Sandy's current service.

The Mayor then closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.