

Minutes of the Town Council meeting of Sandy Town Council held in the Council Chamber at 10 Cambridge Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire on Monday 9th December 2024 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs N Aldis, B Blackley (from 19.34), A Effiong, J Hewitt (Chairman), R Lacey, S Lee, A Lock, R Lock, M Pettitt, C Osborne, M Scott, P Sharman, and S Sutton.

Absent: Cllrs S Baker and N Thompson

In attendance: Mrs. N Sewell (Clerk), Ian Reed (Deputy Clerk), Ward Cllr Pashby and 8 Members of the public.

Action

The raffle draw did not take place as some ticket stubs had not been supplied by the vendors. A time, place and date for the draw will be duly published.

1 Apologies for Absence (119-2024/2025)

Apologies were received from Cllrs Baker and Thompson and Ward Cllrs Bell and Ford.

2 Declaration of Interest and requests for dispensations (120-2024/2025)

- i) *Disclosable Pecuniary Interests* – None
- ii) *Non-Pecuniary Interests* – None
- iii) *Dispensations* – None

3 Public Participation Session (121-2024/2025)

Eight members of the public were present during this item, including the representative of a local farmer who spoke on item 11. He told Members that Field 3 offered the Council an opportunity to make an impact on the Community for the long term.

He acknowledged there would be concerns about upfront costs but that the local farmer in question, and other supporters of the development of the site for agricultural and allotment use, were keen to work with the Town Council to overcome barriers that would prevent use of the site being taken forward.

He asked for expediency in decision making to allow the farmer to occupy the site in order that cultivation could start in March to allow the farmer to take advantage of the next growing season.

4 Minutes of Meeting of Town Council (122-2024/2025)

Members received the minutes of the meeting of Sandy Town Council held on Monday 21st October 2024 at 7.30pm and approved them as a correct record of proceedings.

5 Minutes of Committees and recommendations therein

(123-2024/2025)

Members received and noted the minutes of the meetings of the following committees and sub-committees:

RESOLVED:

- i) to receive and note the minutes of Community Services & Environment Committee held on 4th November 2024.
- ii) to receive and note the minutes of Policy, Finance & Resources Committee held on 25th November 2024.

RESOLVED to agree the following recommendations:

- That the following costs be taken out of 2025/26 budget and to be paid from this year's budget instead:
 - £6,307 for the purchase and installation of an additional CCTV camera at the skate park and increase the ongoing CCTV maintenance fees by £371 (revenue). Also to note that ongoing revenue costs will be increased by another £500 per annum to include monitoring fees (£871 in total), These increased fees have already been accounted for in the latest draft budget for 2025/26.
- That the following costs be provisioned for in 2025/26 budget:
 - Replacement Bethco Mower attachment - £25,000
 - Lease for Allotment Site - £1,200 (revenue)
 - Lease for Beeston Community Garden - £1,200 (revenue)
 - BRCC set up fees for Beeston Community Garden - £6,000 (revenue)
 - Upgrade of Town Council website - £12,500 with on-going annual cost included in revenue
 - That a new noticeboard for the cemetery to match the one on Beeston Green at a cost of £5,000 be included in the overall project costs.
- That The Car Park Working Group report back to Full Council regarding ANPR provision for car park fees (see Item 6).

An updated budget has been circulated to Members following the PF&R meeting on 25th November. This shows an increase of 7.91% to the precept total, which equates to an increase of 25.49p per week for a Band D Property. Cllr Osborne asked Members if they could consider before the next meeting of PF&R on 6th January whether they would be happy to go ahead with this increase. Any queries/ comments about the budget should be sent to Cllr Osborne prior to that meeting.

RESOLVED

- iii) to receive and note the minutes of Development Scrutiny Committee held on 21st October 2024 and 25th November 2024

RESOLVED

- iv) to receive and note the minutes of the Human Resources Committee held on 18th November 2024

RESOLVED to agree the following recommendations:

- To note the details from NALC on the agreed National Pay Scales for 2024/25.
- To agree to increase all staff salaries by one scale point from 1st April 2025 in line with the Staff Appraisal's Policy.
- The following recommendation was dealt with under Item 10 – Agree the appointment of a Minutes Secretary across 16 hours per week at a total cost of £15,721 including NI, pension and HMRC employer contributions.

The Chairman brought forward Item 11 for discussion at this point in the meeting.

6 Car Park Parking Solutions (124-2024/2025)

Members considered a recommendation from the Carpark Working Group regarding parking solutions at the High Street car park.

RESOLVED to defer the item and that a more detailed report be considered at the Community Services & Environment Committee to be held on Monday 16th December.

7 Reports from Central Bedfordshire (125-2024/2025)

Members received the following answers to questions posed to Ward Councillors Sue Bell, Simon Ford, and Rob Pashby. Cllr Pashby was present to clarify matters for Members.

- 1)** If CBC are to make £32million cuts. What services are being axed? Will it impact on local bus services? Are officers being made redundant?

Ans) The general public is party to the same information as we Ward Councillors in relation to the matter and Members are referred to the papers relating to the Executive Meeting on 3rd December. There are currently many conversations taking place in relation to the budget which will be set in February 2025, including Overview and Scrutiny on 16th December with central government grants to be finalised from Westminster. Until this has happened, any response to this question is purely speculative. Your attention is also drawn to Cllr Adam Zerny's interview on the BBC News website (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c3e393p997zo>)

- 2)** Is it true that CBC has cancelled the plan to build an extra care home on the Sandye Place Academy SPA site? We understand further discussions have been undertaken with regard to the potential development of a residential care home on the site, are there any further updates?

Ans) On Thursday 21st November 2024, Cllr Bell asked the following written question: "It is widely acknowledged that Allison House needs replacing. Is the administration intending to build a care home on the SPA site?" The full question can be found on the website.

Cllr Smith responded, despite the question being addressed to Cllr Watkins. He stated that "no formal decision has been made. The proper processes still need to be followed, including public consultation to inform any executive decision. Cllr Bell has asked officers to place a paper on the agenda of January's Executive meeting to start this process and Sandy Town Council will be aware that this is on the Executive Plan.

At the same time, the Council will soon be publishing a draft Capital Budget for public consultation so Members and the public can have their say on whether the Council should continue to make provision for the required capital expenditure to do so. As we are all aware, Allison House has reached the end of its life, and it is still certainly the aspiration of all CBC Councillors that this does come about."

The supplementary question was "Does this Executive have any plans for the Sandye Place site that it can actually communicate to the council?" Response from Cllr Smith: Not as part of your question as that doesn't relate to the re-provision of the home. Something will be forthcoming after future discussions."

The Executive Meeting on 7th January is a key meeting.

- 3)** How successful has the garden waste paid for collection service been and will it be the same price and standard of service next year? If householders pay for more than one bin, will they get a sticker for each bin?

Ans) Each bin gets its own sticker. There is a 2% increase on the service and take-up has been greater than expected.

- 4)** Has the previous government's cap on Council Tax increases been changed? What increase is being proposed by the CBC Executive?

Ans) The government's cap still stands at 4.99% and this is the anticipated increase.

- 5) How is the work of the Highways contractor monitored to ensure that council taxpayers are getting value for money?**

Ans) CBC uses Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to monitor the contract, supported by a monthly operational board, and a quarterly strategic board. For individual repairs/schemes, we have a warranty period where the contractor is required to re-repair any work that fails under conditions where it shouldn't. Additionally, a clerk of works oversees our larger scale maintenance repairs, working closely with Milestone to identify and address any defects before the work is officially signed off, and identifying any follow up remedial works while still within warranty.

6) We understand no progress has been made in regard to Pleasant Place as the correct process in CBC had not been followed. Please can you confirm what we as STC need to do to take this matter forward?

Ans) Cllr Bell will provide a written response to this once in possession of all relevant information which will not be until after the meeting due to officer's leave.

7) Could we please have a reply to the question Cllr Osborne has previously raised regarding sale of the function facility at "the Meadows".

Ans) The Meadows Conference / Function Suite is currently Under Offer. As this is commercially sensitive further information is not available at this time.

8) In the light and experience of recent heavy rains and flooding what plans CBC Highways have to finally diagnose and deal with the perennial flooding at the west end of Bedford Road.

Ans) We believe that Perennial means "every year," which isn't necessarily correct in this location, however, we agree that it is happening and needs to be addressed.

Cllr Pashby has spent a lot of time understanding the flooding issues in Sandy, Beeston and Blunham.

Indeed, there are some complex issues. The multiple agencies involved in the region of the A1/Bedford Road roundabout adds to the complexity:

- CBC Highways
- The IDB
- The Environment Agency
- National Highways
- Anglian Water

However, the recent event saw an extraordinary amount of rainfall in the River Ivel catchment area, and major flooding occurred to the Southwest of Sandy, where the majority of the unprecedented rain fell at an unexpected time of year. This caused river levels to rise including the Ivel through Sandy. This was the root cause of the flooding at the bottom of Bedford Road.

Factors that resulted in Bedford Road flooding this time: The level that the Ivel reached caused the water table level to rise and the water level itself caused back pressure on the drainage system, both public drains and culverts. Evidenced by water egressing through manhole covers.

The volume of water that fell on Sandy, in several short periods of time, overwhelmed the drainage system: falling on top saturated ground, the water had nowhere to go.

Timing of this event (September) was unfortunate. The gullies were due their three-year cyclical clean in October and some were blocked. Subsequently Cllr Pashby ensured that the gullies and drains along Bedford Road were cleaned, checked, and flushed as soon as possible, but, alas, after the event. We await hearing from CBC Highways as to whether this should be cleaned more often (to be escalated at local Highways meeting in January).

National Highways is responsible for drainage from the A1. Cllr Pashby examined the culvert that drains to the Ivel, under the A1 and via the Meadows and it was obvious that this was blocked including a fly tipped three-piece suite. This takes water from The A1 but also from Bedford Road. CBC Highways have contacted National Highways to rectify.

Flooding of some nearby properties was caused to a degree by vehicle driving through the flood, many creating a significant bow wave. Due to demand on their service, it took 4 hours for a Highways team to close the road, and still people drove through when it was closed! Police attended prior to closure by Highways but did not stay to enforce a closure. Some residents blocked the road with their vehicles.

Ivel flowrate: Cllr Pashby has asked the Environment Agency for their river flow management strategy including dredging and vegetation cutting from Sandy to Tempsford. The bridges at the A1 and Girtford function as a flow restriction, but dredging may improve the flowrate and therefore level. The operation of the sluice at Tempsford is fully understood but this has a limited effect on Sandy, but a larger one on Blunham.

Ongoing Actions beyond those above:

- To review and comment on CBC Highways' final response to flooding in the Sandy, Beeston and Blunham Ward, from this event.
- To review and comment on the final, multi-agency, task-force investigation into floods Winter 23/24. Expected imminently and subject to a question at last CBC Full Council
- To monitor the gullies at A1/Bedford Road and arrange ad hoc cleaning or increased maintenance as necessary
- To review and comment on the multi-agency, task-force investigation into this event
- As part of the above, to request a river level monitoring station for Sandy Beeston.

Cllr Pashby would welcome any further suggestions.

Cllr Aldis asked Cllr Pashby if the fly tipping had been removed from the side of the A1 and he confirmed that it had. Cllr Aldis also commented that he had not been able to find information on the budget cuts on the CBC website. Cllr Pashby responded that the government settlement had not yet been confirmed and so currently the work was based on an assumption.

Cllr Pettitt commented on the state of Pleasant Place and issues with flooding in the area. He alluded to a previous administration when it was promised that CBC Highways would take over ownership of the area and undertake the necessary improvements to bring the road to standard. He added he was disappointed that CBC had said the matter was not currently a priority. Cllr Pashby re-iterated that Cllr Bell was taking the matter up with the relevant officer at CBC and would report back accordingly.

Cllr Pashby reported that the most dangerous issues in the Market Square, such as loose paving stones and unstable drain covers had been patched up prior to the town's Christmas Lights Switch on Event.

8 Sandye Place Update (126-2024/2025)

Members received a verbal update from Cllr Hewitt regarding Sandye Place. She informed them that at the last meeting of the Working Group it had been agreed that before any next steps could be taken certain questions needed to be answered, such as:

- How much is the plot worth and what does that include?
- How has the plot been valued?

Cllr Hewitt had pursued an answer from Cllr Watkin at CBC but had only received an answer to confirm that the Carnival could use the site next year. On a follow-up call the previous week, Cllr Watkin was

under the impression that the CBC officer dealing with the site had sent answers to Cllr Hewitt, and as this had not been the case he would ask that the answers be sent through.

Cllr Hewitt added that queries regarding the care home had been answered by Ward Cllr Bell in the previous Item 7.

Ward Cllr Pashby then informed Members that a new paper would go to the CBC Executive meeting in January and an initial draft of the report was due out the following week. He added that Sandye Place and a new care home for the town were still high priorities for CBC but that budget restraints would cause issues. A consultation would take place mid-January to mid-April with an Executive decision due in October 2025.

9 NALC Pay Award (127-2024/2025)

Members received an update from NALC on the agreed National Pay Scales for 2024/25.

RESOLVED to note the report

10 Creation of Minutes Secretary role (128-2024/2025)

Members received a recommendation from the HR Committee to appointment a Minutes Secretary across 16 hours per week at a total annual cost of £15,721 including NI, pension and HMRC employer contributions.

RESOLVED to agree the recommendation.

11 Allotments – Field 3 (129-2024/2025)

Members were asked to consider and agree that the Town Council secures the whole site at Field 3 in accordance with a lease on a peppercorn rent from CBC subject to agreed conditions with CBC and a local farmer. Development of the land for allotments would be made in consultation with the Allotment Association with the Town Council opening up negotiations with the Allotment Association regarding the management of the site, in strict adherence to specific terms set out by the Town Council.

Members were also asked to note that a local farmer hoping to sublet part of the land for agricultural purposes had approached the Council with suggested ways to work with them, including looking at how costs might be split across the two parties in order to expediate the farmer's use of the land and allow him to purchase seed potatoes and other vegetables in time for the next growing season. This correspondence was circulated to Members separately.

RESOLVED that the Town Council would go ahead with a lease from CBC on a peppercorn rent for the whole field and that a group made up of the Town Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Cllr Hewitt, Cllr Sutton, and Cllr A

Lock would undertake negotiations on behalf of the Council to get the leases sorted out. It was also agreed that further discussions with CBC would need to be undertaken to allow the farmer to start cultivating the land in March 2025.

12 Depot Roof repair report and quote (130-2024/2025)

Members received a report from the Clerk regarding findings from a roofing contractor that highlight further works for consideration.

RESOLVED to waive the Council's Financial Regulations and ask the contractor that had quoted for the work to proceed with the recommended work. The Clerk would also look into whether the roof was subject to any guarantee.

13 Action Plan (131-2024/2025)

Members reviewed the Full Council Action Plan for 2024/25.

RESOLVED to note the Action List.

14 Reports from Councillors on Outside Bodies (132-2024/2025)

Members received the following reports from Council representatives on outside bodies:

- i. SSLA Report Cllr Pettitt
- ii. Sandy Children's Centre – Cllr R Lock:

RESOLVED to note the reports. Cllr Pettitt informed Members that Item 3.2 in his report regarding works to the perimeter fence had not yet taken place but that it was expected the works would be completed on 12th December 2024.

15 Correspondence (133-2024/2025)

Members noted correspondence received by the Town Council since the last meeting of Full Council and any actions arising from such items. All correspondence was circulated to Members separately.

RESOLVED to note the correspondence.

16 Mayoral Events (134-2024/2025)

Members were informed that Cllr Hewitt would give them a full update on her most recent Mayoral engagements at the next meeting.

17 Press Releases (135-2024/2025)

- Christmas Lights Round Up and Mayors Christmas Carol Service

18 Chairmans Items (136-2024/2025)

The Mayor reminded Members that Code of Conduct training would be taking place on the evening of Wednesday 11th December, commencing at 7pm.

19 Date of Next Meeting

20th January 2025

Meeting Ended at 21:33

Town
Clerk