

Sandy Town Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Policy, Finance and Resources Committee of Sandy Town Council held in the Council Chamber at 10 Cambridge Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire on Monday 14 October 2013 commencing at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs P N Aldis, C Butterfield, C Osborne (Chairman), M Pettitt, M Runchman, M Scott, R Smith and G White

Absent: Cllrs D Sharman and S Walsh

In attendance: Cllr W Jackson

1 Apologies for absence (40/2013-14)

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Sharman and Cllr Walsh.

2 Declarations of interest and requests for dispensations (41/2013-14)

- i) Declarable Pecuniary Interests – None.
- ii) Other Interests – Cllr Osborne and Cllr Scott drew attention to their offices as Chairman and President respectively of Sandy Football Club which affected item 4v and item 6.

3 Minutes of previous meeting (42/2013-14)

RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the Policy, Finance and Resources Committee held on 12 August 2013 as a correct record of proceedings.

4 Financial Matters (43/2013-14)

- i) A list of payments and transfers for September 2013 and a detailed report of performance against budget for the financial year 2013-14 was tabled and deferred for consideration later in the meeting.
- ii) **RESOLVED** to note the conclusion of the external audit for the financial year 2012/13 and **to recommend** approval of the completed annual return to Sandy Town Council at its planned meeting on 21 October 2013.
- iii) **RESOLVED to recommend** to Town Council that it should approve a request from the Town Clerk to purchase additional software for the Town Council's accounts package (already approved for purchase from the 2014-2015 financial budget) before the coming year end so that the packages can be installed

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and working ready for the start of the new financial year, the purchase in the sum of £1,241 to be funded from reserves.

- iv) The Chairman drew attention to advance information from Central Bedfordshire Council in a letter from Cllr Maurice Jones that it did not intend to pass on to Sandy Town Council any mitigation funding provided by central government in respect of last year's changes to Sandy's tax base as there was no statutory requirement to do so. The Chairman noted that many principal authorities, including Bedford Borough were intending to pass on mitigation funding and noted the severe impact on the budgets of councils such as Sandy where there was a significant number of benefit claimants in the parish. Members were advised that the Town Clerk had written to Alistair Burt MP to ask for support and a meeting of officers of the larger town councils in the Central Bedfordshire area had been scheduled for 22 October 2013 to discuss joint action. There had also been some correspondence between Sandy Town Council and CBC regarding a seminar for town and parish councils on precept issues which was arranged for 7 November 2013. Central Bedfordshire Cllr Aldis advised that he had put down a motion asking CBC to pass on 80% of any mitigation funding and expected this to be debated in full Council.

RESOLVED to write to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and to Central Bedfordshire Council following the meeting on 22 October 2013.

- v) A report from the Clerk concerning previous discrepancies in billing arrangement for white-lining at Bedford Road Recreation Ground and electricity at the Football Pavilion, Bedford Road had been circulated before the meeting. **RESOLVED** to note the report and the arrangements made for future billing.

5 Banking Arrangements (44/2013-14)

A report from the Town Clerk on proposed changes to the Town Council's banking arrangements had been circulated before the meeting. Members discussed this at some length and in particular considered the implications of moving to an institution which did not have a High Street presence in Sandy.

RESOLVED to pursue the matter of changing banking providers in more detail after the budgeting process is completed and the planned accounting software changes have been made but to consider institutions with local branches only.

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6 Request for amendment to parking arrangements at Bedford Road Recreation Ground (45/2013-14)

A member of the public spoke about his concerns about safety on Bedford Road following the recent imposition of parking restrictions in Albion Court. He provided photographs taken on a Sunday afternoon showing parking on both sides of the road and parking on the pavement. He noted that parking problems were far worse since the yellow lines had been introduced as the number of cars now parking on Bedford Road had vastly increased. He had seen families pull up, park across the road and ignore the crossing to reach the recreation ground.

Members then considered a request from Sandy Football Club to review parking arrangements at Bedford Road Recreation Ground following the imposition of double yellow lines in Albion Court. A report from the Town Clerk on the subject was discussed whilst members viewed photographs of parking congestion on Bedford Road and the location of yellow lines in Albion Court. Several members gave accounts of parking congestion on specific occasions and it was agreed that the new restrictions (which included yellow lines in front of the bus stop on Bedford Road and in front of the emergency access gate for the Recreation Ground) had led to increased problems. Members expressed differing views about allowing parking on the Recreation Ground itself. It was noted that a planning application would probably be needed if this were to be permitted in the future. It was agreed that the yellow lines had improved visibility at the junction of Albion Court with Bedford Road and this was welcomed.

RESOLVED to propose to Central Bedfordshire Council that the parking restrictions in Albion Court were having a great effect on congestion and road safety in Bedford Road and therefore the double yellow lines should be removed at least from one part of Albion Court whilst retaining the restrictions at the junction itself. A site visit was to be requested so that CBC members/officers could consider whether the parking restrictions imposed had been a sensible and proportionate response to the problems of congestion in Albion Court.

7 Jenkins Pavilion (45/2013-14)

A report from the Clerk regarding the future management of Jenkins Pavilion had been circulated before the meeting and this was discussed. New terms were proposed for future management of the Pavilion by the contractors appointed by Central Bedfordshire Council for its leisure facilities including Sandy Leisure Centre. Cllr White noted a typographical error in the second line on page 14 of the papers the word "lease" should read "deal". Members discussed the merits of the new terms of agreement which included an agreement that any profits made from the management of the Jenkins Pavilion would be identified

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and reinvested in the Building following discussion with the Town Council. Differing views on the benefits of this arrangement were expressed. It was suggested that monthly reports might be too frequent.

RESOLVED to recommend to Town Council that it should proceed with the outsourcing of the management of the Pavilion as part of the CBC leisure contract on the terms proposed in the report.

8 Financial Report (46/2013-14)

The Chairman returned to item 4 i) of the agenda and members discussed the financial reports provided.

RESOLVED to note the list of payments made to the end of September along with the detailed report of financial performance against budget for the year to date.

9 Fallowfield (47/2013-14)

A detailed report from the Deputy Clerk concerning work outstanding on the Fallowfield development and its impact on staff time had been circulated before the meeting and the report had been preceded by a site visit by the Deputy Clerk with Cllrs White and Sharman, members for the Fallowfield ward. The report was discussed section by section and the following resolutions were made.

A Fallowfield Recreation Ground and Open Space

A1 **RESOLVED** to note the condition of the Fallowfield play equipment.

A2 **RESOLVED to recommend** to Town Council that no snapped trees in Fallowfield Recreation Ground be replanted, landscape material would be removed and grass seeding undertaken over the areas that were initially planted with shrubs at an approximate cost of £150 for materials. A recorded vote was requested and those in favour of this proposition were Cllrs Aldis, Osborne, Pettitt, Runchman, Scott and Smith. Those opposing the proposition were Cllrs White and Butterfield.

A3 **RESOLVED** to defer a decision on future arrangements for grass cutting of the Fallowfield Recreation ground to Town Council on 21 October 2013 if more information was available at that time if not to the next PF&R meeting on 25 November 2013.

A4 It was proposed to recommend to Town Council that five additional bins are installed at Fallowfield Recreation Ground – an additional bin in each play area, a bin near the ball wall and a bin at the two entrances to the site that do not have a bin. The approximate cost to purchase the bins and the materials to install them was £2,000. A recorded vote was requested; those in favour of the proposition were Cllrs Pettit, Runchman and White. Those against were Cllrs Aldis, Butterfield, Osborne, Scott and Smith.

RESOLVED to recommend to Town Council that three additional bins

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be installed at Fallowfield Recreation Ground – an additional bin in the ball wall and a bin at the two entrances to the site that do not have a bin.

B Goldfinch Drive

RESOLVED to recommend to Town Council that selected shrubs and hedging areas which have failed in this part of the estate be replaced with a mixture of replacement planting and grass seeding at an approximate cost of £750 for materials but a physical barrier such as chestnut pale fencing to allow the planting to establish was not approved.

C Open Space along Sunderland Road behind even numbers of the Harriers

D Open Space along Sunderland Road behind odd numbers of Woodcock Close and even numbers of Fieldfare

RESOLVED to seek quotations from independent contractors for all the work described in the report before making any further decisions about proceeding.

E Open Space along Sunderland Road, behind odd numbers of The Jays

RESOLVED to recommend to Town Council that the shrub planting in this area is significantly reduced by Town Council staff to allow the area to be managed and maintained effectively by the outdoor staff.

9 Budgeting process (48/2013-14)

A timetable proposed for the preparation of estimates and the budget for 2014/15 had been circulated to members as follows:

PF&R Committee Monday 14 October 2013 – followed by Financial Workshop 2 (if time permits) premises alterations to be discussed

Town Council Monday 21 October 2013 - Presentation from DCK Beavers

CS&E Committee Monday 4 November 2013 – any recommendations to go to PF&R

PF&R Committee Monday 25 November 2013 – recommendations and instructions to Town Clerk re first draft

Town Council 2 December 2013 – First draft of budget discussed

PF&R Committee 6 January 2013 - Second draft of budget discussed and recommendation to Town Council

Town Council 13 January 2013 – Final draft of budget approved and precept agreed.

RESOLVED to note and approve the timetable proposed.

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10 Review of Premises (49/2013-14)

A report from the Clerk regarding potential alterations to the premises at 10 Cambridge Road had been circulated before the meeting.

RESOLVED to exclude members of the public and press from the meeting under the Public Bodies (admission to Meetings) Act 1960 (as extended) because the following item on the agenda involved the likely disclosure of confidential information defined as exempt information in Part 1 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972.

Members discussed potential alterations to the premises which could potentially facilitate more efficient working and better service.

RESOLVED to note the Clerk's report.

Additional information would be provided when it was available and when the Premises Review Group and the Staff Review Groups had met again.