

# Sandy Town Council

**Minutes of a meeting of the Policy Finance and Resources Committee of Sandy Town Council which was held in the Council Chamber at 10 Cambridge Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire on Monday 15 January 2018 commencing at 7.30pm.**

**Present:** Cllrs P N Aldis, P Blaine, T Cole, A M Hill, W Jackson, M Pettitt, M Scott (Chairman), D Sharman, P Sharman, S Sutton, N Thompson

**In attendance:** Mr C Robson (Town Clerk)

*Actions*

**1 Apologies for absence (76-2017/18)**

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr C Osborne and CBC Cllr T Stock.

**2 Declarations of interest (77-2017/18)**

Cllr Scott declared an interest in agenda item 9 – Scale of Charges as a Member of the Sandy Football Club.

Cllr Pettitt declared an interest in agenda item 9 – Scale of Charges as a Member of the Sandy Cricket Club.

Cllr N Thompson and Cllr T Cole declared an interest in agenda item 6 – Fallowfield lighting scheme as Members of the Friends of Fallowfield group.

**3 Public Participation Session (78-2017/18)**

No members of the public were present, and no questions had been received in advance of the meeting.

**4 Minutes of previous meeting (79-2017/18)**

**RESOLVED** to receive the minutes of the Policy, Finance and Resources Committee held on 27 November 2017 and to approve them as a correct record of proceedings subject to the following amendments;

- The minutes gave the incorrect date of the next PFR committee meeting and this should be amended to 15 January 2018.
- 'dulcification' on page 5 of the minutes should read 'duplication'

Admin

Admin

**5 Financial Reports (80-2017/18)**

- i) A balance sheet and detailed financial report showing income and expenditure against the revenue budget for the year to 31 December 2017 had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

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Members reviewed the income and expenditure summary and the following comments and explanations were made;

The Clerk informed Members that page 5 was a duplicate of page four.

A Member asked that thanks be noted to Cllrs T Cole and G Leach for all their efforts in raising funds for the Christmas Light Switch on event. The Clerk commented that more money had been raised than showed in the budget line, but that VAT had to be paid on some of the fundraising activities.

It was proposed and seconded that any income generated from the Christmas Lights event above and beyond the £2,000 budget be rolled over into the earmarked reserves for the 2018/19 financial year to help support further improvements to the event. The additional funds raised should be set aside to ensure that the event can continue to thrive and add new and different elements and entertainment.

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that the £3,080 income generated by the Friends of Sandy Christmas Lights be rolled into earmarked reserves for the purpose of supporting future Christmas Lights Switch-On events.

Town Clerk

Members reviewed the detailed income and expenditure report page by page.

A Member asked about the overspend in 402 4012. The Clerk informed the committee that this was due to a leak in a water pipe which was on the public highway. A partial refund was sought.

The Clerk drew Members attention to 402 4028 and explained that the overspend was due to two contracts which covered service into the next financial year. A proportion of the cost will be accrued for.

The Clerk drew Members attention to 405 4042 – Streetlighting. There was a large over spend due to a number of streetlight lanterns failing. Replacement lanterns are not covered by the general maintenance contract and are now replaced with LED lanterns. The Council may wish to take the overspend from capital or general reserves. However, at present the revenue budget is able to withstand the overspend due to underspend elsewhere. Members may wish to re-visit the overspend before the year end.

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It was **RESOLVED** to receive and note the report.

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

The Clerk commented that the payment of £9,442.02 for the Story in Stone project would be reimbursed to the Council by CBC as part of the MTMF scheme.

A Member queried a payment of £571.20 to Rosetta Publishing in December and whether this was a payment for December and January as the amount is higher than previous months.

*Following the meeting the Clerk checked payments and was able to confirm that the payment was for both December and January.*

**RESOLVED** to approve the schedule of payments.

- ii) Bank reconciliations and statements.

**RESOLVED** that Cllr Scott scrutinise the bank reconciliations and statements and sign these as approved at the end of the meeting.

Cllr M Scott

## 6 Fallowfield Lighting Scheme (80-2017/18)

The Clerk informed Members that he had now received a quote for the cost of installing lighting on the Fallowfield recreation ground. The engineer has provided two options for Council to consider. As there are no electrical supply cables running to the recreation area either option will require the installation of a feeder pillar and associated fusing equipment. Both prices include trenches from Osprey Close to the recreation ground, supply and fit of feeder pillar, excavation of a trench from the feeder along the path, supply and fit of lights, all re-instatement works.

### Option 1

Installation of 4 48w LED lights, two at each play area £14,677+VAT

### Option 2

Installation of 8 48w LED lights running along path at 25m spacing. £20,830+VAT

A Member questioned the purpose of the lighting and whether it was to act as a deterrent or help with identification of individuals from CCTV images. Members felt that with or without the mobile CCTV camera, the lighting would act as a deterrent to loitering and anti-social behaviour. The area is very large and dark, especially in winter months. If lighting was to be installed the CCTV camera could be relocated to a new light within the recreation area.

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A Member asked whether a night vision camera would be a more cost-effective option, however the camera would not have sufficient scope for the play area.

Members felt that any lighting in the area would improve the facility and safety and it was proposed that the Council broadly agree to a lighting scheme in principle and that further estimates and site plans are sought.

**RESOLVED** that the committee continue to progress providing lighting at the Fallowfield recreation ground and seek two more quotes and site plans.

Town Clerk

## 7 LED Street Lighting (81-2017/18)

Members reviewed a report from the Clerk. The Clerk informed Members that he had received a quote of £90,000 from the Council's streetlight engineer for the conversion of 199 lights. Due to the value of the work the Council would need to go out to tender, so further reductions may be possible. An interest free loan for £21,000 was available to the Council to support the costs of the work. The Council would need to source alternative funding for the remaining £70,000.

Members considered that matter and potential funding of the work. It was noted that many of the lighting columns were starting to need new lanterns and that over the next few years this would be a cost the Council would need to factor in.

A Member stated that he felt the savings that could be achieved by converting all lights at once offered a significant discount when couple with the interest free loan available from Salax. A Public Works Loan (PWL) could be used to fund the remaining costs of the scheme. The PWL could be paid back over a long period so as not to impact heavily on the Council's budget.

A Member commented that entering into a scheme with a payback over 20 or so years did not make commercial sense. The financial gain of doing all lights at once needed to be clarified.

A Members expressed concern that the cost of conversion would continue to increase if all the lights were not done at once. Another Member stated that technology changes so fast that the Council may find it needs to update lighting again in 20 years.

A Member queried whether it would save costs to replace some

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lighting with footlights.

A Member clarified that the Salax interest free loan would be payable over 5 years from the electricity savings made. During those 5 years the Council would also need to pay back instalments on a PWLB if one was taken out.

The Clerk agreed to arrange for a Member with technical knowledge on lighting, to speak with the Council's streetlight engineer.

**RESOLVED** that the Council agree in principle to converting the councils lighting stock to LED and pursue the Salax grant while seeking 2 more estimates for the work.

Town Clerk

***The Chairman agreed to take item 9 next as it may have an impact on agenda item 8.***

## **8 Scale of Charges for 2018/19 (82 -2017/18)**

- i) Members considered the report from the Clerk on evening bookings. It was noted that although the Council did not receive many bookings the service could be of value to community groups and should not be taken away.

Members agreed that although they would like to see the option of evening bookings continue it was dependent on staff availability and should reflect the Council's costs in opening and closing.

It was Proposed, Seconded and **RESOLVED** that the council continue with evening bookings but reflect staff costs in the fee and make the inclusion of the kitchen optional, with a charge of £7.50 per hour for use of the kitchen.

Admin

- ii) Members reviewed the proposed scale of charges. A Member queried the scattering of ashes and why a charge should be included. Other Members felt that a charge was appropriate as it was the Council's land and a record of scattering should be kept. It was also commented that the new cemetery may have an area specifically for scatterings and as such the charge should be left in.

It was agreed to round the charge in perpetuity to £2,420.

**RESOLVED** to approve the scale of charges for the 2018/19 financial year subject to the above amendments.

Admin

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## **9 2018/19 Budget and Precept Request (83 -2017/18)**

Members considered the proposed budget and precept which resulted in a 3.46% increase in precept per band D equivalent. A Member asked whether the £2,000 budget to support the Council's compliance with the GDPR could be reduced following confirmation that a Data Protection Officer service is to be offered to Town Council's for £500 a year. It was noted that all Members of staff would still need to receive training on GDPR and that the budget should be kept in place to ensure the funds are available.

A Member asked how a reduction of £1,000 in budget would affect the precept increase. The Clerk informed Members that reducing the budget by £1,000 would result in a 3.27% increase.

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that the proposed 2018/19 budget and precept be approved.

Town Clerk

## **10 Action List (84-2017/18)**

Members reviewed the current action list.

It was noted that the amended planning permission for the depot had been received over Christmas and that a meeting of the working group would be arranged to progress the matter. Demolition and Archaeological contractors had been notified.

The Clerk informed Members that he had met with SLL to review the contract for the Jenkins agreement and that both parties had agreed that the profit share element should be put back in. This has been communicated to CBC and we are awaiting a final copy for signing.

It was agreed that the Community Engagement Strategy would be moved to the Community Services and Environment Committee to progress.

## **11 Planning Notification Letters (85-2017/18)**

Members reviewed the report and were provided with a copy of the letter received from a Member of the public in which the process of issuing planning notification letters was queried.

The Clerk informed Members that there was an error in the report due to a confusion between the Clerk and planning administrator. The quoted 30 minutes to send out planning letters for each application was incorrect. The 30 minutes represented the whole time spent on the application, issuing letters comprised between 5 and 10 minutes per application. The Clerk informed Members that if an average of 10 minutes was assumed per application then the

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total administrative and resource cost of sending 64 letters during this financial year would be £260.08.

A Member commented that planning applications are not just a matter of the visual and that neighbouring properties may be affected by things that cannot necessarily be seen, such as services.

Other Members commented that they felt the service is useful and that recently several examples can be given where a member of the public has expressed their gratitude for the letter as they were not advised by CBC.

A Member commented that he would not be opposed to dropping the process, so long as the public were made fully aware as to why and how they could continue to view and comment on plans.

A Member commented that they had worked out the cost to be approximately £4 per application, which they felt represented good value.

It was commented that it was good to review the process and that the wording of the Town Council's planning letters could be amended to encourage residents to come and speak with a member of staff or Councillor to help guide them through plans.

A Member noted that there appears to be duplicate applications for properties, contributing to a 'stream' of letters and that perhaps this could be reduced. It was also commented that the letter should let people know when they refer to an amended application as opposed to new application. Amended applications may still have an impact on properties.

It was Proposed, Seconded and **RESOLVED** that the Council continues with the process of issuing planning letters and does its utmost to make sure neighbours affected are notified, while taking into account all elements of a development and not just those that are visual.

Admin

It was agreed that the Clerk would write to the Member of the public explaining the Council's decision.

## **12 Unauthorised Encampments on Council Land (86-2017/18)**

Members received and considered a draft policy and procedure on unauthorised encampments on Council land. Members welcomed the policy, however a Member commented that there was still concern over the level of support the Council will receive from other

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organisations. The Chairman reminded Members that the police were due to attend the next Full Council meeting and that unauthorised access and encampments should be raised with them.

Members felt that the documents were well written but that the following amendments should be made to the policy document;

- 3.2 – amended wording to read ‘The Council will, in dealing with unauthorised encampments, act, at all times fairly and equitably’.
- 4.2 – Clerk to check police wording and if appropriate change to ‘unauthorised persons’.
- 4.3.2 – Clerk to check wording of section 61-62 and ensure ‘occupier’ and ‘landowner’ are used correctly and uniformly across both documents.

The following amendments were proposed to the procedure document;

- 5.1 – Amend to state that Clerk should not attend a site alone.

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that the Council adopt the above policies subject to the agreed amendments.

Town Clerk

It was agreed that a simple guide or FAQ be put on the Council’s website detailing what can be done when an unauthorised encampment occurs. Residents could be easily directed to the guide/FAQ rather than long policy and procedure documents.

Members were informed that volunteers working with BRCC would be on The Pinnacle Field on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> January to re-instate areas of damaged ground.

## **13 Chairman’s Items (87-2017/18)**

There were no Chairman’s items.

## **14 Date of next meeting (88-2017/18)**

It was noted that the date of the next committee meeting will be 26 February 2018.