

# Sandy Town Council

## Minutes of the meeting of Sandy Town Council held in the Council Chamber at 10 Cambridge Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023 7.30pm

**Present:** Cllrs N Aldis, J Hewitt, R Lacey, J Ivanciu-Wilkinson, A Lock, R Lock, C Osborne, M Pettitt (Chair), M Scott, P Sharman and S Sutton

**Absent:** Cllrs P Blaine, L Ivanciu-Wilkinson and N Thompson

**In attendance:** Mrs N Sewell (Clerk), Ward Cllr Maudlin, George Bailes from the Transportation Consultancy, Chris Patterson and Arnold Gilpin of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, and one member of the public.

*The Chair opened the meeting by congratulating Cllr Maudlin on her recent appointment as Chair of Central Bedfordshire Council.*

*He reported that after a brief stay in hospital Cllr Blaine was now home and recovering.*

*He also passed his, Members' and staff's condolences on to Cllr L Ivanciu-Wilkinson following a recent family bereavement.*

### Action

#### 1 Apologies for Absence from (160 - 2022/23)

Admin

Apologies were received from Cllrs P Blaine, L Ivanciu-Wilkinson and Ward Councillors Ford and Stock.

#### 2 Declaration of Interest and requests for dispensations number (161 - 2022/2023)

Admin

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

#### 3 Public Participation Session (162 - 2022/2023)

One member of the public was present and wanted to talk about the CBC/Marston Forest Community Woodland discussed at the last meeting of the Town Council. He expressed his disappointment that despite promises made at that meeting by representatives of CBC offering solutions to problems highlighted by a current tenant of adjacent land that required access to water, which the plans would effectively block, no work had been undertaken to take those promised discussions forward. He added that the tenant in

question was still also waiting a decision regarding tenancy which was threatening to impact on production timescales.

The Chair asked the member of the public to direct their concerns to Cllr Maudlin as the CBC representative at the meeting. She confirmed she was lobbying members and working hard to elevate the conversation to get things moving and that she would continue to do so.

Town Clerk

**4 Minutes of previous Town Council Meeting (163 - 2022/2023)**

Admin

**RESOLVED** to receive the minutes of the previous meeting of Sandy Town Council held on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2022 and to approve them as a correct record of proceedings.

**5 Minutes of Committees and recommendations therein - (164-2022/2023)**

Admin

To receive and note the minutes of the meetings of the following committees and sub committees (if applicable) to approve recommendations therein which do not arise elsewhere.

i) **RESOLVED** to note the minutes of the meeting of Development Scrutiny Committee held on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2022 and 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023. It was noted that the agenda had stated minutes for the 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022 in error. The Chair of the Committee also commented that an error had occurred in the minutes of the meeting on which the wrong address of Farm Buildings, 2 High Street, Sandy, SG19 1PA had been noted, instead of Farm Buildings, 2 High Road, Beeston, SG19 1PA. This would be amended in the minutes of the next meeting.

ii) **RESOLVED** to note the minutes of PF&R Committee meetings held on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2022 and 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023 and approve the following recommendations:

- Agree and sign the Civility & Respect Pledge (dealt with under item 15)
- Approve the 2023/24 budget and precept as set out in the submitted papers (dealt with under item 8).
- To approve the calendar of meetings for 2023/24 (dealt with under item 17)

To note the following amend to the minutes of the PF&R meeting of 16<sup>th</sup> January, on page 2 under item 6 it should have read 'resulting in a total budget of', not 'a total precept of'.

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iii) **RESOLVED** to note the minutes of meeting of Community Services and Environment Committee held on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

## 6 **Neighbourhood Plan Update (165-2022/2023)**

Members received a presentation from George Bailes of The Transportation Consultancy (TTC) who have been appointed by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to undertake and prepare a transport strategy for the Town Centre.

Clerk

The group is reviewing the movement of people and vehicles through and around Sandy Town Centre to help build a Transport Strategy to improve accessibility and safety for all road users, and create a comprehensive and cohesive transport system for the town for the future.

Mr. Bailes reported to Members that once the Transport Strategy was approved it would open access to further funding that would help the group take their plans forward. The plan presented at the meeting had been designed following consultation through questionnaires to understand what the residents of Sandy wanted for the town now, largely:

- Better routes for cyclists
- To reclaim some more space for pedestrians – by narrowing roads
- Creating a no HGV zone
- Taking some of the parking away to create greater space for the local businesses to use that could also be utilized for community events
- An increase in community facilities.

Mr. Bailes talked through the design for a new layout for the town centre that would help achieve those aspirations, this included:

- Creating a dedicated cycle route through the market square
- Diverting buses away from the market square up to a turning point by Tesco. Creating a potential transport hub there
- Converting some of the parking spaces outside of the library and China Express into bus stops during peak hours, but allowing parking off peak (post 7pm) when the buses no longer run.
- Taking some of the parking spaces in the market square to create a larger pedestrianized area/ further space for local businesses to utilize such as local cafes.

Members supported the ideas in principle, especially ways to reduce HGVs moving through town and creating a community hub

but some were not convinced that re-routing the buses and taking away parking spaces was the best solution. Some members felt that more parking spaces would attract more visitors to the town and so reducing this facility would be counterproductive. Parking would also be a potential issue when the planned developments in the Market Square and at Faynes Corner were complete as the plans for these developments had double counted parking spaces, which would put a squeeze on parking provision in the area. Other concerns were raised around the route for school buses dropping off and picking up pupils for Samuel Whitbread.

Concerns were also raised at the prospect of losing some disabled parking bays and the bays by the Baptist Church which are utilized for both church services and funerals.

Mr. Bailes stated that data showed greater use of pedestrianized areas and creating a stronger community/café culture in town centres was more likely to attract visitors and increase footfall to the area than providing parking spaces. He thanked Members for their feedback and stated that their comments would be considered in the next iteration of the design.

Cllr Maudlin added she felt it was an exciting plan for Sandy and hoped that the plans would encourage local people to use the area more not just visitors from outside the town.

Cllr Hewitt who Chairs the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group thanked the Steering Group for all the work they had put into gathering data and looking at plans. A lot of time and effort had been given running consultations, managing questionnaires and gathering residents' comments to get the plans to this stage.

## **7 Reports from Central Bedfordshire Council (166-2022/2023)**

Cllr Caroline Maudlin informed Members that she and Cllr Hewitt had recently attended a meeting with Mr. Richard Fuller MP about the closing of health hubs in the area including Biggleswade. She reported Mr. Fuller would be taking the matter forward at Prime Minister's Question Time.

Cllr Hewitt told members that the current Centre at Saffron Place had three rooms that were not being utilised and this would also be brought up when she and Cllr Pettitt met with Mr Fuller to discuss issues with the A1 later this month.

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Cllr Maudlin added that she was liaising with residents who were struggling to get appointments at Shannon Court health centre and that this was an issue that needed to be resolved.

A further plea was made to Members to volunteer for Streetwatch, Speedwatch and Dogwatch. Cllr Maudlin stated that StreetWatch as the group desperately needed more members to make it viable.

Work is being undertaken to try and improve disabled access to Sandy Town centre, this included work to improve access to paths at Quince Court. Cllr Maudlin reported that currently there are no dropped curbs near this site and that residents were having to access these by traveling the length of Medusa Way.

Cllr Maudlin reminded Members that the Highways contractor that CBC uses will be changing and this could result in some delays to their services during the transition period.

Following concerns about residents at the Meadows crossing the A1 into town, Cllr Maudlin said she had arranged for maps to be drawn up to show the safest pedestrian access to the town from the site.

Cllr Aldis commented that if a bus service were introduced for the area this might alleviate the problem.

Members also raised the following issues:

- Potholes, which were getting worse and a real hazard for motorists and cyclists. Cllr Maudlin replied the freezing temperatures had made the situation worse and encouraged Members to use the FixMyStreet app to report potholes to the CBC Highways team.
- 20MPH Speed limit, Cllr Maudlin was asked if these could be monitored by Streetwatch? She replied she thought that this would come under Speedwatch's remit.

Cllr Sutton thanked Cllr Maudlin for the work she was doing to help residents at Engayne Avenue and St Neots Road with their concerns regarding parking and traffic safety in the area.

## **8 2023/24 Budget and Precept (167-2022/2023)**

Members received a recommendation from the Policy, Finance and Resources Committee to agree the submitted budget for 2023/24 and related Precept request.

Admin

**It was RESOLVED** to agree the recommended budget increase of £5,339 on the 2022/23 budget, which amounted to a 0.85% rise. It was noted that due to a decrease in the tax base of 0.22% the overall precept increase for 2023/24 would stand at 1.08%.

It was noted that the Rolling Capital Fund allocation for 2023/24 would be reduced to £23,126 from £51,300 making a saving of £28,174.

The Precept requirement for 2023/24 would be £633,459 which equates to a Precept per Band D equivalent of £156.53, an annual increase on current charges of £1.67 based on Band D (or 3.2p per week).

Cllr Aldis thanked Cllr Osborne as Chair of the PF&R Committee for all his work answering the many questions arising around the budget and also thanked the Clerk for her work helping to put the papers and reports together.

## **9 Reports from Councillors on Outside Bodies (168-2022/2023)**

i) Members received and noted the report from the Sandy Sports and Leisure Association Committee.

ii) Members received and noted the report from the Sandy Twinning Association.

## **10 Action List (169-2022/2023)**

### **East West Rail**

No further updates to report currently.

### **A1 Local Issues**

Cllr Pettitt and Cllr Hewitt would report back following their meeting with Mr. Richard Fuller MP on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

### **Sandye Place Academy**

No further updates to report currently.

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## 11 Correspondence (170-2022/2023)

Members noted the following correspondence which had been circulated to them via email prior to the meeting.

i) Electric Vehicle Charging SPD Documents and Forest of Marston Vale Design Guidance

ii) Pan-Bedfordshire Bus Users Forum. **It was AGREED** that Cllr Aldis would volunteer to take part in the Forum.

iii) Planning Inspectorate updated plan for the Proposed deregistration of common land/town or village green at: BEESTON VILLAGE GREEN VG14 (5)

## 12 Data Protection Support (171-2022/2023)

Members received a renewal notice for the Data Protection Support contract from PNC at a cost of £500.00.

**It was RESOLVED** to renew the contract for the coming year.

## 13 Skip supply for IDB works at Beeston (172-2022/2023)

Members received a request to support works by the Internal Drainage Board at Beeston to clear water courses by making a donation towards a skip.

**It was RESOLVED** that £400 would be paid towards skip hire for this purpose. In addition, the Deputy Clerk would be asked to follow up with IDB about promised works to take place at Beeston Green which had been postponed from Autumn 2022.

Deputy Clerk

## 14 Fire Safety Works, 10 Cambridge Road (173-2022/2023)

Members received a report and quote for recommended works to be carried out following a Fire & Security annual check.

**It was RESOLVED** to agree for work to be carried out in principle but for the Clerk to seek further quotes. It was agreed that Cllrs Pettitt, Hewitt and Osborne along with the Clerk be given delegated powers to agree the quotes and commission the work.

Clerk

## 15 Civility & Respect Pledge (174 -2022/2023)

Members received a recommendation from PF&R to consider signing NALC's Civility & Respect Pledge.

**It was RESOLVED** by all members present for Sandy Town Council to sign the pledge and adopt the related policies. The following statements were all duly agreed:

<b>Statement</b>
Our council has agreed that it will treat all councillors, clerk and all employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations, and volunteers, with civility and respect in their role.
Our council has put in place a training programme for councillors and staff
Our council has signed up to Code of Conduct for councillors
Our council has good governance arrangements in place including, staff contracts, and a dignity at work policy.
Our council will commit to seeking professional help in the early stages should civility and respect issues arise.
Our council will commit to calling out bullying and harassment when if and when it happens.
Our council will continue to learn from best practice in the sector and aspire to being a role model/champion council e.g., via the Local Council Award Scheme
Our council supports the continued lobbying for the change in legislation to support the Civility and Respect Pledge, including sanctions for elected members where appropriate.

**16 Consultation (175 -2022-2023)**

Members received information regarding a consultation on two new planning guidance documents, circulated to all Members prior to the meeting.

**It was RESOLVED** to note the information and for Members to respond to the consultation individually.

Cllr Maudlin encouraged Members to have their say.

**17 Meeting dates for 2023/24 (176-2022/23)**

Members received a recommendation from PF&R setting out a calendar of meeting dates for 2023/24.

**It was RESOLVED** to agree the to the calendar with no amends.

**18 PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND THE PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED** that in accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and by reason of the

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confidential nature of the remainder of the business, the Press and the Public be excluded from the Meeting. **(177 -2022/23)**

## **19 HR Update and Staffing Request (178 – 2022/23)**

Members received a report from the Clerk about current staffing levels and a request for Financial Administrative cover.

**It was RESOLVED** for a financial administrator to be recruited on a fixed-term contract for two months on a three-day a week basis to cover a backlog of work and provide administrative support to the wider team. The contract would be reviewed following the initial two month period.

Town Clerk

## **20 PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960 RE-ADMITTANCE OF THE PRESS AND THE PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED** that the confidential business having been concluded, the Press and Public be re-admitted to the meeting. **(179 - 2022/23)**

## **21 News/Press Release (180 – 2022/2023)**

- Budget and Precept
- Civility & Respect Pledge

## **22 Chairman's Items (181 – 2022/2023)**

There were none.

The Mayor informed Members that he would update them on the Mayor's engagements at the next meeting of Full Council in March. He also welcomed Cllr Sutton back to Council following her recent injury.

**Date of the next meeting: 6<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

The meeting closed at: 21:30