

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 23 March 2020 commencing at 7.30pm.

Present: Cllrs N Aldis, A Hill, C Osborne (Chair), M Scott, and P Sharman.

In attendance: Cllrs S Doyle and S Sutton, and Mr C Robson (Town Clerk).

Actions

1 Apologies for absence (124-2019/20)

Apologies were received from Committee Members Cllrs P Blaine, J Hewitt, W Jackson, R Lock and M Pettitt. Apologies were also received from Cllrs Gibson, Knagg and Thompson.

2 Declarations of interest (125-2019/20)

Cllr Osborne declared an interest in item 7 as a member of the Royal British Legion.

3 Public Participation Session (126-2019/20)

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

4 Minutes of previous meeting (127-2019/20)

RESOLVED to receive the minutes of the Policy, Finance and Resources Committee held on 17 February 2020 and to approve them as a correct record of proceedings.

The Chairman agreed to take Item 8 next on the agenda due to the urgency of the matter and the need to observe corona virus social distancing guidelines for those in the 'At Risk' category.

5 COVID-19

Members considered a report and amended recommendations from the Clerk on the situation regarding COVID 19 (Corona Virus) and steps the Council would need to take to ensure decision making and business continued.

The Clerk commented that due to government and NALC information and advice changing on a daily basis, it had been hard to produce the report. Some items in the report had already been superseded by new advice. The staffing team were already suffering from lower numbers and an influx of calls and related work, it will be inevitable that numbers of staff and resources will be stretched in coming weeks. There may also be a necessity to look at options for homeworking and reduced contact. It will be important though that the lines of communication between the

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public and the Town Council remain open, especially to provide guidance and signposting for those in need.

To ensure the continued business of the Council, there will need to be a temporary increase in delegated powers to last as long as government advice would suggest necessary. The Scheme of Delegations already states that in times of emergency the Clerk, in conjunction with the Mayor, can take action to make decisions and incur expenditure to protect the Council, its staff and its assets. The committee made the following recommendations to strengthen delegated authority.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to delegate authority to the Clerk, Mayor and Deputy Mayor and relevant Committee Chairpersons of the Council to undertake any measures and make any decisions deemed necessary to ensure the continued business of Council, provide support to the community and to protect the health and wellbeing of Councillors and staff based on government and NALC advice.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND if a situation should arise where it is not possible to obtain the required three signatures for cheque payment, the Council agrees to suspend standing orders to allow the Clerk to make payment by or dual authorised BACS. Each individual payment made by BACS must be approved in writing by the Clerk and two of the Council's approved signatories. Payments must be reported to Council at the earliest opportunity.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to postpone the Annual Town Meeting which was to be held on 27th April 2020 to a date to be decided at a later time.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to seek to hold the Town Council AGM on 18th May 2020 as scheduled pending government advice and restrictions at the time. If the AGM cannot go ahead, the current arrangements for the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Committee Chairpersons and Council representatives shall continue along with all policies usually agreed at that meeting.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to cancel the Councillor Surgery to be held on 3rd April 2020.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the Clerk, Mayor and Deputy Mayor determine whether future surgeries will go ahead as the date for each surgery approaches.

It was noted that the VE Day event would be postponed from 8th May 2020 to August 2020 to coincide with the VJ Day commemorations. The

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Events Working Group would agree the exact date of the event.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the fair which was to be held in April on Sunderland Road be cancelled in line with government advice.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that given the current guidance from the government, all committee meetings and scheduled Full Council meetings are cancelled. As set out in legislation, the Mayor will be able to call an Extraordinary meeting if the need should arise.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the level of expenditure the Clerk can incur under delegated authority be increased to £2,500.

Members discussed how planning application decisions will be made in the absence of meetings and it was agreed that this could take place over email. Emailed comments and objections/no objections could be collated by the office and submitted to CBC. The Chairman of the Committee may not have access to emails and the Clerk would look at the best way forward and advise.

The Clerk provided Members with a number of updates relating to the work of the Council and partner bodies which had been impacted by the restrictions put in place by the government. The Clerk will issue weekly bulletins to Members providing the most up to date information.

Members were made aware of a group that was to be established called 'Sandy – In it Together'. The community group would be working to provide support to the vulnerable and had three CBC Ward Members on it. It was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk becomes involved with the group's committee on behalf of the Council.

Cllrs Aldis, Doyle and Sutton left the meeting.

6 Financial Reports (128-2019/20)

- i) Members considered a balance sheet and detailed financial report showing income and expenditure against the revenue budget for February 2020.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the financial reports for February 2020.

- ii) Members received a budget overview report for February 2020. **RESOLVED** to note the report.
- iii) Members scrutinised a schedule of payments made since the previous meeting. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Schedule.
- iv) It was **RESOLVED** that the Chair check and approve the bank reconciliations and statements.

Cllr
Osborne

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| <p>7 Bedford Borough Council BACS Payment (129-2019/20)
Members considered a payment of waste collection services via BACS. RESOLVED to approve regular payment via BACS to Bedford Borough Council for monies due on waste collection.</p> | Admin |
| <p>8 Grant Applications (130-2019/20)
i) Members considered a grant application from the Sandy Royal British Legion. It was proposed, seconded and RESOLVED to award a grant of £500 from the 2020/21 Grants budget.</p> <p>ii) Members considered the grant of £500 awarded to the Sandy Carnival committee for the 2020 Carnival which had now been cancelled. Members felt that receiving the grant back from the carnival committee would ensure there wasn't an outstanding grant at the end of the financial year. This in no way reflected a lack of support in the 2021 carnival which the Council would want to continue to support.</p> | Admin

Admin |
| <p>9 Action List (132-2019/20)
Members received and noted a copy of the action list. The Clerk commented that the contractor had been on site fixing cladding, it did however still require the full repair the Council were requesting. This will continue to be pushed for progression.</p> | |
| <p>10 Territorial Auxiliary and Volunteer Reserve Association Lease (133-2019/20)
Members considered the costs of renewing the lease for the Army Cadets HQ at Berwick Way. RESOLVED to approve that the Council proceeds with the renewal of the lease and that the Clerk and committee chairman be delegated authority to agree the best value quotation from those received and that the costs do not exceed £1,750.</p> | Clerk/
Chair |
| <p>11 Streetlighting in Recreation Grounds (134-2019/20)
Members considered the potential cost of introducing streetlighting to areas owned and managed by the Town Council. Given the current circumstances it was agreed to defer this item until September 2020 when it could be considered as part of the estimates process.</p> | |
| <p>12 Adoption of Streetlights (135-2019/20)
Members received and noted communication from Central Bedfordshire Council on an update regarding the adoption of streetlights.</p> | |
| <p>13 Five Year Budget (136-2019/20)
Members received and considered a draft five-year budget.</p> | |

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RESOLVED to approve the draft five-year budget and update this during the annual precept and budgeting process.

14 Social Media Policy (137-2019/20)

Members considered an amendment to the Social Media Policy covering the set up of a Friends of Sandy Green Wheel Facebook.

RESOLVED to approve the amendments to the Social Media Policy.

Admin

15 Chairman's Items (138-2019/20)

The Chairman thanked Members for attending at what was a challenging time for the Council, our community and the wider country. Not since World War Two had this Council had a meeting to consider and approve the measures it has done so at this meeting.

16 Date of next meeting (139-2019/20)

Following the recommendation that committee meetings be cancelled, the date of the next meeting of the Committee would be advised once the current restrictions and advice from the government had changed.