

Sandy Town Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Policy, Finance and Resources Committee of Sandy Town Council which was held virtually via Zoom on Monday 7 December 2020 commencing at 7.30pm.

Present: Cllrs N Aldis, P Blaine, J Hewitt, A Hill, W Jackson, C Osborne (Chair), M Pettitt, M Scott and P Sharman.

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

Actions

1 Apologies for absence (44-2020/21)

Apologies were received from Cllr R Lock.

2 Declarations of interest (45-2020/21)

Cllr Aldis declared an interest in Agenda Item 6 as a possible beneficiary of the grant request under consideration. Cllr Aldis indicated he would not be taking part in discussion on that matter.

3 Minutes of previous meeting (46-2020/21)

RESOLVED to receive the minutes of the Policy, Finance and Resources Committee held on 26 October 2020 and to approve them as a correct record of proceedings.

4 Public Participation Session (47-2020/21)

There were no questions from members of the public.

5 Financial Reports (48-2020/21)

i) Members considered a balance sheet and detailed financial report showing income and expenditure against the revenue budget for October 2020. Members raised concerns over water usage at Sunderland Road, which was still a high expenditure. Investigation was ongoing and it was suggested a query be raised with the provider of the new irrigation system at the bowls club to see if water pressure could have an impact on the usage and rates.

ii) Members received a budget overview report for October 2020. Members reviewed the report page by page and agreed to note the report.

iii) Members scrutinised a schedule of payments made since the previous meeting. The Clerk informed Members that some payments on the list had already been reported to the committee at its last meeting. A member queried a payment for 'purity tea seed meal'. The Clerk informed Members that this will have been part of an order by the SBC or SCC as part of supplies required for the maintenance of the sports pitches. This would fall under the budget for the relevant club.

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iv) It was **RESOLVED** that the Chair of Policy Finance and Resources check and approve the bank reconciliations and statements.

Cllr
Osborne

6 Grant Application (49-2020/21)

Members received and considered a grant application from the Sandy Good Neighbours.

It was proposed and seconded that the Council award a grant of £150. Members commented on the good work the organisation had carried out over the last year and how valuable they were to residents in the town.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve a grant of £150 to the Sandy Good Neighbours for the Friendship Club.

Members asked that payment be made to the organisation as soon as possible.

7 External Audit 2019/20 Financial Year (50-2020/21)

Members noted the completion of the External Audit for the 2019/20 Financial Year. Members thanked those involved for their work in the clean audit which had been received. The audit would need to be formally accepted by the Town Council at its meeting on 14th December 2020.

8 Depot Cladding (51-2020/21)

Members received and considered a report from the Clerk on the engagement of a contractor to carry out repair works on the Council Depot's cladding. The report was noted.

9 Cemetery Boundary Wall (52-2020/21)

The Clerk informed Members that only one quote had been received for repair works to the cemetery wall on Stratford Road. Further quotes were continuing to be sought and the matter would be deferred until the next meeting of the Policy, Finance and Resources committee.

10 Chapel Roof (53-2020/21)

The Clerk explained that although several contractors had come to review the work needed on the Chapel roof and indicated that they would submit a recommendation and quote, however only one had been received to date. Two further companies had stated they would be submitting quotes for the work. It was agreed to defer the matter to the next meeting of the Policy, Finance and Resources committee.

11 Chapel Refurbishment (54-2020/21)

Members considered a recommendation from the Cemetery Working Group on re-opening the cemetery chapel for use. Members

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commented on the good work undertaken by volunteers on the refurbishment of the Chapel. The work was well done, and the chapel was now a pleasant space which could quickly be used by undertakers. Thanks were expressed again for the work undertaken and the generosity of the volunteers.

Members considered the recommendations and it was suggested that the recommended fee of £75 was too low. A Member commented that the fee should be at least £100.

It was proposed and seconded that the Chapel be re-opened for use by undertakers for services and that a flat fee of £110 be charged.

The Clerk confirmed that a comparison of Chapel fees in other cemeteries suggested the fee could be in excess of £100. It was agreed that the fee should be low enough to encourage use of the facility, but at a reasonable level that was comparative with other similar facilities.

It was proposed and seconded that the Chapel be re-opened for use by undertakers for services and that a flat fee of £110 be charged.

A Member queried whether non-residents would be able to use the chapel. The Clerk stated that they would, but that some other Council's charge higher rates for use by non-residents. The Council currently charges treble rates for non-residents who purchase plots and install memorials in the cemetery. Members commented that the use of the chapel should be a flat rate and that the proposed £110 seemed reasonable in comparison with other chapel fees.

RESOLVED that the cemetery chapel be opened for use again by undertakers for funerals and included in the Council's Scale of Charges. That a flat charge of £110 is included in the Council's Scale of Charges for use of the cemetery Chapel.

The Chairman informed the committee that he would take agenda items 15 and 16 next, as Cllr Sutton had indicated that she would be joining the meeting for the 2021/22 scale of charges and budget items.

12 Grant Awarding Policy (58-2020/21)

Members reviewed and looked at readopting the Council's grant awarding policy. A Member commented that section 6.5 needs to be separated into two separate points. This was agreed.

RESOLVED to re-adopt the Grant Awarding Policy.

Admin

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13 Treasury Management Policy (59-2020/21)

Members reviewed and looked at readopting the Council's Treasury Management Policy. A Member commented that the section about the level of general reserve differed to the explanation on the Council's precept papers. It was agreed that the note in the precept papers would be amended to correctly reflect the Treasury Management Policy.

RESOLVED to re-adopt the Treasury Management Policy.

Councillor S Sutton joined the meeting.

Admin

14 Scale of Charges 2021/22 (55-2020/21)

Members received and considered the Council's 2021/22 scale of charges. The Chairman took Councillors through the document page by page.

It was proposed that the administration charge included within the scale of charges be increased by 2.75% to reflect the increase in salary per hour for an administrator.

It was proposed that the maintenance in perpetuity charge be rounded up to £2,557.

A Member questioned whether any concerns had ever been raised about charges. The Clerk commented that non-resident fees for the cemetery were often questioned, but that higher rates for non-residents was common practice in cemetery charges.

RESOLVED to adopt the 2021/22 scale of charges be approved subject to amendments to the hourly administration charge and maintenance in perpetuity.

Admin

15 2021/22 Capital Expenditure (56-2020/21)

Members received and considered notes on capital expenditure for the financial year 2021/22. A Member asked if underspend in the current financial year could be used to offset increases in next year's revenue budget. The Clerk commented that it is recommended that underspend be allocated to the Council's rolling capital fund for future capital expenditure, but that if the Council wished, it could use the general reserve or capital budget to offset budget increases if it felt this was necessary. This may result in the Council having a lower than recommended reserve, which would need to be addressed in future years.

Members queried the archaeological costs of the cemetery extension excavation. The Clerk explained that the remaining costs were for the completion of post-excavation works and writing up, both of which are

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requirements of the planning permission granted for the cemetery. The cost could be spread over a couple of years if necessary. The lower cost was as a result of further discussions with CBC and the archaeological contractor on what work needed to be carried out and included. The Clerk would check if archiving charges would be incurred for the finds from the excavation.

Town
Clerk

Members expressed some concern over allotment costs, which were still unknown until CBC and their appointed developer confirmed what would be included as part of the lease for the community land, this includes securing boundaries which could be expensive. It is important to keep capital funding available for the allotments, but it may cost more than the estimate depending on what is finally agreed with CBC.

The Clerk informed Members that two residents were querying replacement of old boundary fencing at Bedford Road for which the Council is responsible. A fencing contractor has inspected the site and agrees that one section requires repair and replacement. The amount quoted is within the Clerk's delegated authority and can be funded from revenue maintenance. A second area was looked at and the contractor advised that it was secure, and no work was required. However, the fencing contractor inspected all fencing and advised that large sections may require replacement. A quote of £7,236 had been received for the replacement of 42 metres of 5ft high close board panels and concrete slotted posts and 12" concrete gravel boards. Further consideration would be needed by the Council on works to be carried out, but an allowance should be made in the capital expenditure fund.

It was noted that some careful research would be needed on gang mowers if the Council were to purchase these, to ensure that the right equipment was bought which would benefit the Council and the areas it maintains. Members felt that the equipment would allow for the cutting of large areas quickly and could be of benefit for the Council in summer 2021.

Members considered the capital budget allocation in the 2021/22 budget and precept. It was agreed to leave the allocation as it stood and not apply an increase.

16 2021/22 Precept and Budget (57-2020/21)

Members received a summary report from the Clerk on the current position of the 2021/22 budget and precept. The Chairman took Members through the budget page by page.

Members discussed the proposed 3% increase in the salary budget and whether this could be reduced given the government's announcement that public sector pay will be capped in 2021. The Clerk explained how

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a lower increase would impact on the overall budget and precept request. It was agreed that the Human Resources Committee would consider the matter further and report back to the Full Council as part of the final approval of a budget.

The Clerk informed Members that budget changes agreed at the previous meeting had been incorporated into the proposed budget. The Clerk had also increased the grass cutting budget by £1,000 to cover potential costs associated with taking on land at Berwick Way and including this in the CBC grass cutting contract.

17 Chairman's Items (60-2020/21)

There were no Chairman's items.

18 Date of next meeting (61-2020/21)

It was noted that the next Policy, Finance and Resources Committee meeting will be on Monday 4th January 2021.