

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 8 May 2017 commencing at 7.30pm.

Present: Cllrs P N Aldis, P Blaine, T Cole, M Hill, M Scott (Chairman) and P Sharman.

In attendance: Mr C Robson (Town Clerk)

Actions

1 Apologies for absence (125-2016/17)

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs Jackson, Osborne, Pettitt, D Sharman and CBC Cllr Stock.

2 Declarations of interest (126-2016/17)

- i) Declarable pecuniary interests – None
- ii) Non pecuniary interests – None

3 Public Participation Session (127-2016/17)

There were no questions received from members of the public.

4 Minutes of previous meeting (128-2016/17)

RESOLVED to receive the minutes of the Policy, Finance and Resources Committee held on 27 March 2017 and to approve them as a correct record of proceedings.

5 Financial Reports (129-2016/17)

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

Members scrutinised the financial report and made the following comments:

A Member queried why the current account appeared to be overdrawn. The Clerk informed Members that the account was never actually overdrawn. If all cheques issued by the Council that month were banked on the same day as the report, it would result in a negative bank balance. However, the Council regularly transfers money into its current account to ensure all payments are covered.

Photocopier costs were significantly overspent. The Clerk informed Members that a new contract was now in place which would see a significant reduction. Printing costs are largely underspent and the allocation of expenditure between the two needs to be reviewed.

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The Clerk informed Members that debtors were recent and not aged. They referred to invoices issued in March for room bookings etc.

Members were concerned about the level of electricity costs at the depot. The Clerk confirmed that the office was reviewing this with the power company and had so far secured a £472 credit against expenditure. The most expensive quarter was the final quarter which just came in and is likely over estimated based on meter readings.

Maintenance costs for the Town Centre car park are over budget. The Clerk explained that part of this is due to repair work carried out after a car hit the barrier. An insurance payment was received and offsets this expenditure. However, the budget was still overspent due to further repairs to the barrier and has been increased in the 2017/18 budget.

Members discussed CCTV costs and noted that expenditure was down due to CBC taking some cameras offline. The income usually received from Aragon Housing had not been received. Aragon Housing felt there was no longer a need for CCTV to be located in Cauldwell Court and are not willing to contribute towards its costs. Members felt this should be pursued. The Clerk informed Members that the agreement was made some time ago and was not a formal written agreement. Members asked that the Clerk pursue the matter and seek payment.

Town Clerk

A Member asked why Sunderland Road Cost Centre was over budget. The Clerk informed Members that there had been expenditure in relation to Sc106 applications and that the income from those applications offset the expenditure.

The Chairman pointed out that although the refuse budget was underspent he had noticed that the outdoor team were having to clear away rubbish/fly tipping of waste we shouldn't be dealing with. Recently some school or community centre doors had been placed on Council land. This will need to be considered during future estimates.

Town Clerk

The Clerk informed Members that the amount received in grant funding for The Riddy was lower this year. This was due in part to conversion rates from the euro. A Member queried whether the grant was to stop in light of Brexit and if so, where that would leave the status of the nature reserve.

Democratic Establishment costs were slightly overspent due to unexpected repairs to the Mayor's chain of office.

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RESOLVED to note and approve the report.

- ii) Members received and reviewed a budget overview report. The Chairman went through each page of the report with Members. The majority of items were covered under the previous agenda item. The Chairman drew Members' attention to the Christmas Lights budget and reminded Members that the organisation and income was struggling and would need to be reviewed further.

The Clerk informed Members that the Council had now comfortably achieved its recommended reserve level.

RESOLVED to receive and note the report.

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

The Clerk informed Members that the money paid out for the Mosaics project had been reimbursed to the Council by CBC's Market Town Match Fund.

A Member questioned a £40 payment to Beds Crimebeat. This payment was for a High Sheriff event attended by the Mayor.

A Member noted that there were several repair costs for mowers. The Clerk confirmed that the ride on mower had needed quite a bit of work this year as it ages.

A Member queried the payment of legal fees to Woodfines Solicitors. The Clerk informed Members that this was for work previously carried out in relation to the adoption of Berwick Way land which ultimately did not go ahead.

A Member queried a payment for a boot wipe and why this was needed. The Clerk confirmed that this was for boot wipes at Bedford Road recreation ground, like those at the Sunderland Road recreation ground.

RESOLVED to approve the schedule of payments.

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iv) To receive and consider the annual accounts for the 2016/17 financial year and then recommend these to Full Council.

RESOLVED to receive the accounts for the financial year ending 31st March 2017.

Members reviewed the accounts. It was commented that the Council is very generous in its tenancies and that this may need reviewing in the future as pressure on the budget continues to mount.

It was agreed that the value of property assets needs to be further reviewed as the amount stated for the car park and toilets seems high.

A Member queried whether the Council still held 11 notice boards. It is confirmed that the Council does have 11 notice boards.

A Member noted that the WW1 descriptive board was included in the Council's assets. There are two more boards that should really be included as well.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the Town Council adopted the accounts for the financial year ending 31st March 2017.

v) 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 Scott

6 Grant Application (130-2016/17)

Members received a grant application from the Bedfordshire Geology Group. The application is for £1,000 to support the costs of improving access to Sandy Warren Lodge Quarry and a new trail which will allow Sandy residents to learn about the local geology and create a safe walking route.

The Chairman stated that he felt the group's proposals were worthwhile and that historically there was an important connection between the quarry and the town. Stone from the quarry was used in the construction of many of the town's older buildings.

The Chairman Proposed that a grant of £200 be awarded. The Proposal was Seconded.

Members spoke on the application and agreed that it was a

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worthwhile pursuit and should be supported. A Member stated that he regretted that the grant could not be larger, but that with the constraints the grants budget faced so early in the financial year, a £200 grant was appropriate.

A Member commented that he would have liked the application to mention more about how children and schools were going to be involved in the proposed project. The Chairman suggested that encouragement to get schools and children involved be attached to the grant awarded.

RESOLVED that a grant of £200 be awarded to the Bedfordshire Geology Group and that this be accompanied by encouragement to involve schools and the children of Sandy in the activities of the group.

Admin

Members spoke about the grants budget and agreed that it needed further consideration ahead of the next financial year to ensure the Council can best support applications. It was agreed that feedback from grant recipients needed to be chased up further.

7 Action List (131-2016/17)

Members received the Action List and updates from the Clerk.

The Clerk informed Members that he had been mistaken and that the Franking Machine contact was not due to be renewed for another year. The 99-year lease with the Everton Estate was up for renewal in 2018 and the Clerk would approach the Estate to begin discussions.

Town Clerk

War Memorial Restoration work is due to start on 22 May. The Clerk will bring back a definitive answer on creating disabled access, however at present it is proving difficult due to the statutory requirements for ramp dimensions and the space available. A moveable ramp can be purchased this year to ensure there is easy disabled access on event days.

It was noted that Drone usage may pick up in the summer and that the Drone policy should now be brought forward.

Town Clerk

8 Town Council Street Lights (132 -2016/17)

Members received a report from the Town Clerk on costs for requested or advised maintenance work to Council owned street light columns.

Members noted that there were five points which needed to be

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decided. The Chairman reminded Members that the budget for 2017/18 was £4,000 and that £1,600 of this budget was already committed to the routine maintenance contract.

Members addressed each point in turn and it was;

RESOLVED to approve the installation of a light shield at Church Path at a cost of £50, subject to investigation by the street light contractor.

Admin

RESOLVED to postpone work to remove redundant columns at Sunderland Road and bring the £600 cost forward to 2018/19 estimates.

Town Clerk

RESOLVED to approve work to repair a leaning column at Sunderland Road recreation ground at a cost of £100.

Admin

RESOLVED to repair a damaged column on Cambridge Road at a cost of £1,700.

Admin

RESOLVED to include the costs of installing a street light on Western Way in the 2018/19 estimates.

Town Clerk

A Member asked that the Clerk investigate whether a street light obscured by trees is in the ownership of the Council and if so get the tree cut back or ask CBC to have this done if it is under their ownership.

A member asked that in the future, should a column be removed due to an accident with a car and the driver is unknown and no insurance is claimed, that this is highlighted in minutes.

9 Jenkins Pavilion Agreement (133 -2016/17)

The committee received the latest draft of the agreement with CBC and SLL over the management of the Jenkins Pavilion.

Members reviewed the agreement and it was commented that there was no provision for profit share. The Clerk informed Members that there had been no scope from profit share over the past few years, but that if the Pavilion were to make a profit the Town Council could receive a % of that. It was agreed this would need to be written into the contract.

Town Clerk

Members had some concerns about where the Town Council stood if SLL were to pull out of managing the facility. The agreement is with CBC to have their leisure provider contractor manage the facility. However, SLL also signs the contract and Members are concerned

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that if they pull out, the contract will not apply to whoever CBC bring in to replace them as the managing company. The Clerk was asked to seek clarification on this point. This may need to include a clause about if SLL pull out and what protection and assistance STC can seek from CBC.

Town Clerk

The contract was to be brought back to the next committee meeting.

10 Jenkins Pavilion Scoreboard Shutter (134 -2016/17)

Members received a report and quote from the Town Clerk. The Chairman went over the report and informed Members that the Cricket Scoreboard was damaged beyond repair and that while a new one could be installed, the protective shutter needed to be altered first to ensure the same damage doesn't occur again.

A Member queried whether funding had been applied for from the Sports England Small Grants Fund. Other cricket clubs had received 75% of the cost of new electronic scoreboards, including other clubs in Central Bedfordshire. The Council must ensure that this funding has been explored to ensure there isn't any unnecessary burden on the tax payer.

RESOLVED to ensure the grant funding has been fully explored prior to committing tax payer funds. That the matter return to committee if the grant funding is not possible.

Town Clerk

11 Complaints Policy (135-2016/17)

Members reviewed the amended policy which had been worked on by the Vice Chair and office. A Councillor noted that policy was very thorough.

RESOLVED to adopt the proposed complaints policy.

12 Treasury Management Policy (136-2016/17)

Members reviewed the Treasury Management Policy.

RESOLVED to re-adopt the Treasury Management Policy

Admin

13 Chairman's Items (137-2016/17)

There were no Chairman's Items.

14 Date of next meeting (138-2016/17)

It was noted that the date of the next committee meeting will be 12 June 2017.