

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting for the Parish of Sandy, Bedfordshire, held on Monday 14 May 2018 at Sandy Upper School commencing at 7.30pm.

Present: Cllr M Scott (Town Deputy Mayor as Chairman of the meeting) together with 7 Town Councillors, 2 Central Bedfordshire Councillors and 25 members of the public.

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Cole, Leach, Osborne, Pettitt, D Sharman, and CBC Cllr Stock.

Absent: Cllr T Knagg

### **2. Minutes of the 2017 Annual Town Meeting**

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Monday 3 April 2017, which had been circulated to those in attendance prior to the meeting being opened, were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **3. Matters Arising**

A Town Council Member commented that the HGV signage which has now been agreed to be placed in Cambridge Road was good news but asked if there would be any similar signage placed on the Fallowfield estate in Sandy. The Clerk confirmed that he had asked Central Beds Council about such signage, but that it had unfortunately not been approved. Signage on Cambridge Road will be brought forward under Central Beds Council's Rural Match Fund and joint funded by Central Beds Council and Sandy Town Council.

### **4. Presentation from AOC Archaeology on the Cemetery Extension Excavation**

Archaeologists Les Capon and Catherine Edwards from AOC Archaeology attended the meeting and presented a fascinating talk including a slide presentation on the work that they had been undertaking over the last few weeks on this site, together with some of their finds. There was also a brief history of Sandy during the time of the Roman settlement and then afterwards when the Anglo-Saxons inhabited the area.

One of the slides shown included a flat area where the Roman settlement carried out industrial activities, dug quarries and created rubbish pits. On the far side of Caesar's Camp was where the Romans buried their dead, in either pots or leather bags. Remains of the pots can and have been

found but unfortunately the leather bags disintegrated into the ground. We then saw an image of a pot that had been mended with lead and a group of three pots – one being a vase containing the cremated remains of a deceased man or woman. The Romans would gather at the site of the burial and celebrate the life of the person by drinking from the vase and then burying it after the celebrations had ended. More remains have been found on the northern periphery of the town, and where the river marks the natural boundary to the edge of Roman Sandy.

The most exciting find has been the remains of a Roman wall and this is the first time it has been seen for between 15 to 1600 years. The Roman wall surrounded the whole of Roman Sandy and was probably a square kilometre inside which denoted a very large Roman settlement.

They have also found the remains of an Anglo-Saxon house and other artefacts. A picture showed where poles and stakes had been dug into the ground. These holes in the ground allow us to see where the house was positioned, and what size and shape it was, and it probably had a thatched roof. The Anglo-Saxons were highly advanced carpenters and the largest pole would have held the roof up. Sandy in Anglo-Saxon means 'Sand Island'.

Les finished by saying everything is going well with the dig and a comprehensive report will be produced at the end of the work, which will be incorporated into a planning document. He then asked if there were any questions:

Q: How do you know that the holes previously mentioned are post holes for a house?

When the posts rot, the soil becomes discoloured by organic content and charcoal.

Q: Does the large size of the Roman settlement raise the status of Sandy as a Roman town?

Yes quite possibly.

Q: Will children get to see the site if they would like to?

Yes children attended the last open day on 10<sup>th</sup> May and they will be very welcome to visit during the next open session.

## **5. Report from Bedfordshire Police on Policing in Sandy**

Chief Superintendent David Boyle along with PCSOs Ann Jeeves and Zoe Taylor attended, with the Chief Superintendent giving the main talk providing an overview of the way that the Police are working throughout Bedfordshire, followed by some additional comments given by the two PCSOs.

The Chief Superintendent began by saying that there are some issues in Sandy and these cannot be tackled alone but in partnership with the Town Council, the Local Authority as well as the public and he was therefore very grateful for the invitation to come and speak at this event as well as other events where he can be questioned and challenged on local issues, which helps in clarifying problems and issues within Sandy.

There are three areas of concern within Sandy: a rise in violent crime – which also includes non-contact, verbal and anti-social crimes; non-dwellings burglary, eg businesses and then finally, criminal damage.

There are various ways in which the Police work to tackle crime and criminal activity. Community policing teams engage in communities to make themselves accessible and recognisable, for example by visiting schools and community groups. Rural Crime Teams work in more rural areas of the county and deal with the impact of crime here. They target road networks helping to prevent criminals from moving around freely. There are currently 133 Officers and PCSOs dedicated to community policing, and the past 18 months the Police have been investing in Neighbourhood Watch schemes, Streetwatch and Speedwatch. All of these joint action initiatives are vital in tackling crime and the Police can help anyone interested in setting up such a scheme in their area. There is still work to be done and rising or changing crime patterns mean that resources have to be re-evaluated. The Chief Superintendent then took questions (one was asked):

Q. Assuming that people report crimes, would it not be obvious to the Police what the problems are and where the resources need to go?

Not all crimes are equal so it depends on the type of crime as to the resources allocated as opposed to just the numbers of crimes reported. Some crimes are more harmful than others. Also because of the high crime rate in areas like Luton, this does not mean that areas like Sandy will be forgotten.

The two PCSOs then added some additional comments:

The PCSOs are based in Biggleswade and the team is broken up into six groups. PCSOs Ann Jeeves and Zoe Taylor are Group 1 which covers Sandy, Biggleswade and 24 other parishes. Recently they have been working on the rise in burglary non-dwelling crimes in the Sunderland Road industrial area. They have carried out a number of visits to this area to try and establish why this is still happening and what can be done to prevent recurrences.

The PCSOs reinforced the message of working together with the Police and if crimes or suspicious behaviour is not reported, they cannot act. A system called BedsAlert sends out emails to make as many people in the locality aware of what has been happening. There is now also an online 101 system – accessible via the Beds Police website, which should help with getting through to the Police to report non-emergencies. The feedback so far has been positive and you can also webchat with controllers.

The Chief Superintendent added that people can experience police ride-alongs, visit cyber hubs and have close contact centre visits to find out how the Police operate. Information can also be found via Twitter, Facebook and their website and Chief Superintendent Boyle can also be contacted.

The Chief Superintendent and PCSOs were thanked for attending the meeting.

## **6. Town Mayor's Awards for Services to the Community**

For the Mayor's Citizens Award, the winner was 22 year old Greg Finlay for the work he undertakes in running Sandy Army Cadets. Greg gives up his free time to organise activities giving extra help if a Cadet needs it for them achieve a pass. Whilst he says that it is the Cadets who deserve the recognition, none of them would be able to achieve what they have, or have all the opportunities they have had, without his commitment and dedication. This award shows how much he is appreciated by both the Cadets and their parents as well as by the whole community of Sandy. Greg was nominated by Anita Jenkins. When presented with the Award, Greg said that he was very proud of what he does, giving up a lot of free time, but it is all worth while for the young people he helps.

The runner up in this category goes to Barbara Danks for setting up a Friendship Group for lonely and isolated people in Sandy. Barbara will collect her certificate at the Town Council Annual meeting on Monday 21 May 2018 in the Council Chambers.

The Mayor's Community Group award was presented to Sandy Army Cadets. These Cadets are enthusiastic and willing to learn. They help out within their local community as and when they are needed, whilst teaching them respect and practical skills like first aid. They also learn to work as a team, and value each other regardless of background. They are always enthusiastic and willing to learn anything new. The Award was presented to Greg Finlay and nominated by Anita Jenkins.

The Highly Commended runner up in this category was presented to Sandy Scout Group and was accepted by Karen Chambers and Steve Roland. The Sandy Scout Group helps to change and shape so many young people's lives. Karen works very hard in running the Scout group, and they both organise the Fireworks display in November and attend the Christmas Lights Switch on Event every year with their very popular burger and hot dog stall. Sandy Scout group was nominated by Liz Alloway.

The Young Person's Award for 2018 was presented to Charlie Friend. Charlie has started up his own glass recycling enterprise to help his neighbours and the local community. There is no glass collection in Beeston, so for an optional fee of whatever people can afford, Charlie collects glass door-to-door in a cart, then takes the cart on foot every week to the recycling facilities in Sandy. Charlie was nominated by Mrs D Read.

The first of two Highly Commended awards in this category went to Zack Alloway who was nominated by Liz Alloway. Zack saved his best friend's life when his friend got accidentally entangled in a rope swing and was hanging from it. Zack acted immediately and called to two girls who were passing by. When they walked by, Zack tried to lift his friend up and phoned 999. He stayed completely calm throughout this time. He eventually got help from Danielle and Steve who managed to get his friend down who by now had blood coming from his eyes and his ears. The Police and ambulance and then a helicopter arrived and his friend was taken to hospital. The boy is thankfully all fine now, and all three of these people and especially Zack, are heroes. Zack also does gardening at Quince Court on Wednesdays for no payment.

The second Highly Commended award went to Joe and Harry Rhodes, and Freddie and Grace Larkins. All of these children, whose ages range from 5 to 11, saved up their pocket money and birthday money – supported by their families – to buy litter picking equipment. During the Easter holidays, they then went litter picking around Sandy and in the Sand Hills

and collected over 10 bags of rubbish – just because they wanted to make a difference. These children were nominated by Mr Ben Bardell, Headteacher at Laburnum Lower School, and it is Mr Bardell's understanding that this project was all the children's idea. The Deputy Mayor commented that it was good to see young people getting involved in such activity for the good of the town. The children were also presented with litter picking equipment.

## **7. Reports from Elected Representatives:**

i) Town Council – Cllr Michael Scott

On behalf of Sandy Town Council, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the Annual Town Meeting for residents of Sandy and Beeston after another very busy and challenging year. The Mayor is unable to make this evening's meeting and as Deputy Mayor I will be presenting the report from Sandy Town Council.

Many of you will have enjoyed the very successful day the town took part in at the beginning of December when our Christmas lights were switched on. Many organisations had stalls to raise funds and the weather was kind to us once again, resulting in approximately 3,000 people turning out to support this festive occasion. Sandy Town Council is committed to the continued support of this very worthwhile event and providing the Christmas lights for the benefit of the local community and we look forward to this year's day which will be on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> December. The Switch-on Event is organised by the 'Friends of Sandy Christmas Lights' group, which relies heavily on volunteers. The group recently elected a new Chair and are working hard to bring new elements to the 2018 event. If you are interested in helping organise this event by joining the group's committee or volunteering on the day, please contact the Council Offices. We would be very glad to hear from you.

The Mayor and I are delighted that we had a settled council in this third year of the current four-year term and we would personally like to thank all our councillors for the time they voluntarily give to our town. The Mayor wishes for me to extend his personal thanks for the support fellow Councillors have shown to him over the years and during his time as Mayor. Several Councillors will be retiring in May 2019 and it would be good to have a full complement of fifteen; if you feel you may be interested then please come along to a Council Meeting during the next twelve months and see what it is all about.

In agreeing the Budget for 2018/19 the Council reviewed and reduced budgets across the board wherever possible but despite this we had to increase our precept to £563k – an increase of £4.69p per year on a Band D property or 9p per week. The Council was able to make savings by re-negotiating or entering into new service contracts for IT, Phones, Photocopier and Printing and sanitary provision. However, the need to increase funding for the ongoing maintenance of streetlighting, the required work to the Council's extensive tree stock and increased costs in refuse removal resulting from fly tipping all placed pressure on the 2018/19 budget.

The Town Council does not rely solely on its precept to fund projects and activities and actively pursues grants and support funding wherever possible. The Council has been successful in obtaining grant funding to refurbish the War Memorial and, similarly, funding has been obtained from CBC's Market Town Regeneration Fund to improve the High Street and Market Square and again work should be starting very shortly on this. In addition, grant funding was made available to show Sandy's story in stone through the Mosaic Designs project and six mosaics have been completed and unveiled during the year. The Lord Chamberlain visited Sandy in February to unveil the ones in the High Street which depicted his relative, Captain Sir William Peel.

During the last year Sandy Town Council has worked to identify Section 106 funds held by Central Bedfordshire Council and where possible has made or supported applications to ensure the funds are invested back into sandy.

A Council Working Group has been working with a Play Equipment Provider to bring forward improvements and additions for each of the play parks maintained by Sandy Town Council. The overall cost of the project will be approximately £150k and the Council is working with CBC to secure funds from Sc106 to cover the cost of these improvements.

As you will be aware from the earlier presentation, archaeological excavation works, which are a planning requirement for the development of the Town Council's cemetery extension project, have now begun. In a later phase of the excavation works there will be an opportunity for the public to visit the site and learn more about what has been found at an open day. Progress continues on the development of the Council depot, works yard and cemetery extension and a working group is currently working with preferred contractors to finalise details on the buildings design and associated costs.

Unfortunately, the acquisition of a large allotment site is no further forward although we have been working with CBC officers to provide some allotments within the Beeston Green Orchard project site. CBC have provided the Council with draft Heads of Terms and we are currently in the process of agreeing a finalised version. This site offers the quickest option for provision of allotments at present, but the Council is aware that it will not fulfil demand and any other potential sites which come forward will be looked into.

A lot of time and effort has gone into responding to CBC's draft Local Plan and 'Call for Sites' to meet housing demands across the area and there have been several opportunities for residents to respond during the past year. The latest draft indicates only minor growth for the town until the route of the East-West Rail Link and the possible re-alignment of the A1 are resolved. Town Councillors have held many meetings working on a Community Plan to help shape the future of our town and this will shortly be issued for consultation.

Regular quarterly meetings continue - attended by the Mayor, myself as Deputy Mayor and the Town Clerk - with our three CBC Councillors so that we are all working together for the benefit of our community.

Councillors regularly receive and review crime and CCTV statistics for Sandy and over the last year Councillors have met with the Police Crime Commissioner, visited the Bedfordshire Police control room in Kempston and the CCTV monitoring centre in an effort to put forward concerns expressed by the community and move towards improved working relationships with other organisations to help tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.

Members also continue to press for local road improvements as well as national decisions about the A1. Councillors have recently met with the Department for Transport and continue to press for decisions on the future of the A1 to be made. The Council recently secured agreement from CBC to install new signage to tackle issues of HGV's accessing Cambridge Road. This will be jointly funded by CBC and STC as part of CBC's Rural Match Fund.

The Mayor was pleased to welcome again a small delegation from our Polish Link-Town Skarszewy in November for the Remembrance weekend. It was wonderful to see so many people from our town both on parade and attending the services at the War Memorial and in St. Swithun's Church to remember those who have given their lives for our

freedom. As part of the Town Council's commemoration of the Centenary of the end of WW1 the Town Council has been hosting a series of talks, information on which has been made available for you tonight. In addition, the Council will be placing lamp post poppies along the route of the Remembrance Day procession in further efforts to help mark this important year. Members of the public are invited to sponsor a poppy and leave a message of remembrance. Again, information has been made available for you this evening.

The Mayor's charity fund this year has been to support four youth organisations in the town who do splendid work – the Brownies & Guides; the Cubs & Scouts; the Army Cadets and the Air Training Corps. Over £1,300 has been raised and the Mayor has asked me to personally thank all those who have attended the mayor's charity events or made donations or supported the events in any way – it is truly appreciated. The Mayor also expressed his thanks, to all the organisations for the warm welcome he and his wife received when they visited them and they thank each organisation for their kind invitations and hospitality.

#### ii) Central Bedfordshire (CBC)

Cllrs Maudlin, Stock and Smith had provided a written report which was made available to those attending the meeting and which presented an overview of Central Bedfordshire Council's work during the year 2017/18.

Cllr Maudlin said that they have a good working relationship with Sandy Town Council, and they do try to make themselves as available as possible to residents of Sandy. All three of the CBC councillors are happy to be contacted regarding anything mentioned in the report or about any other concerns they may have, and that they can be visited at Sandy library on every second Friday, or the last Saturday of the month, between 10 am to 12 noon. She also mentioned the sterling work that Madeline Phippen, the Library Manager, carries out.

Central Beds Council has been trialling a Community Hub at Shefford Library which has proved to be a great success and has received positive feedback. They are hoping to start up a similar hub in Sandy library very soon.

The Sandy Green Wheel committee has now got the walking aspect linked up and will be launched in September to coincide with the Bedfordshire Walking Festival. The cycleway is still being worked on and it will be a

number of years before the whole of the Green Wheel can be cycled around.

Cllr Smith spoke about the Winchester Road area and how Central Beds Council have been working closely with Aragon Housing to improve the area. Funds are now in place to get this project up and running and the plan is to consult with local residents to find out what their issues and concerns are. Anti-social parking is one of the issues to be looked at and they are also hoping to remove some of the planters along the road, although this will be quite costly to do. They have managed to secure 60% of the funding for this area.

Cllr Smith also mentioned the Biggleswade Athletic Club which is provided by Sports England and is run in Sandy on a Wednesday evening. This is a great resource which is used and enjoyed by many children in and around Sandy.

The Local Plan has been submitted to the Department for Environment for their inspection and Councillors will feed back the result of that inspection as soon as they can.

Finally the Councillors agreed that it had been a good and enjoyable year working in partnership with the Town Council and long may that working relationship continue.

Questions put to CBC Councillors:

Q: Is there a programme to replace lamps in CBC owned streetlights?

Cllr Maudlin will investigate.

Q: Will the Service 73 Bus be reinstated on a Sunday?

No subsidies have been put forward and unfortunately it is not economically viable for the bus company to run this service on a Sunday, but we will continue to ask if it can be reinstated at some stage.

Q: Is it correct that the bin collections will not be changing in any way?

There will be no immediate changes to bin collections, but bin collections will soon be standardised throughout the whole of Central Bedfordshire with wheelie bins or bags provided for grass cutting, a big push on recycling education and then eventually to have a three weekly black bin collection.

Q: It seems strange that as Sandy is a growing town, that there are not enough children for Sandye Place Academy. How is it plausible to get rid of this facility?

Some of the lower schools in Sandy, along with the upper school, have opted to extend the age range of children accepted into their schools. Also, because they are academies, the local authority cannot co-ordinate or control schools in the same way that they used to. This is an on-going issue that has been created by new government structures and policies.

Q: Why does Sandy Town Council seem to pick up the tab for fly tipping in Sandy?

Some fly tipping does occur on Town Council owned land and so it is therefore the Town Council's responsibility to clear it up. However, some small amounts of fly tipping have been disposed of by the Town Council team when they have had the resources and manpower to do so. Any other fly tipping has been reported to Central Bedfordshire Council for them to deal with.

## **8. Resolutions and Questions**

No resolutions had been received before the meeting. The Deputy Mayor then opened up the meeting for any additional questions, as follows:

Q: What is the Town Council's view on the future of the land at Sandye Place Academy?

This item was discussed at the Full Council meeting on 16 April 2018.

Members also recognised and supported SHRG's view that the land is an asset of community value. The Council wishes to support this view, whether or not the school closes. It is still a very sensitive subject as none of us know what will ultimately happen regarding the Academy's future.

CBC Cllr Smith added that the preferred option is to keep the building as an educational establishment.

The Deputy Mayor closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.