

Sandy Town Council

To: All Members of Sandy Town Council

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of Sandy Town Council which will be held in the Council Chamber at 10, Cambridge Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire on Monday 15 April 2013 at 7.30 pm. The items of business to be transacted are specified below.

Delia Shephard

Delia Shephard
Clerk to Sandy Town Council
10 Cambridge Road
Sandy SG19 1JE
8 April 2013

A G E N D A

- | | <u>Reports</u> |
|---|----------------|
| 1 Apologies | x |
| 2 Declarations of interest and requests for dispensations | |
| <i>i) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests</i> | |
| <i>ii) Personal Interests</i> | x |
| <i>iii) Requests for dispensations (must be notified to the Proper Officer in writing in advance of the meeting)</i> | |
| 3 Minutes of previous meeting | |
| To consider the minutes of a meeting of Sandy Town Council held at 7.30 pm on Monday 4 March 2013 and to approve them as a correct record of proceedings. | |
| 4 Public Participation | |
| To receive any questions from members of the public. | |
| | x |
| 5 Planning Matters | |
| To review and comment on planning applications: | |
| i) Former Mellor Beauty Site | |
| CB/13/00539/VOC Variation of Condition: to planning permission CB/11/03169/OUT condition 10 to reduce the width of footway/cycleway from 3M to 2M at Former Mellor Beauty Premises, Sunderland Road, Sandy, Beds. | √ |
| CB/13/00542/RM Reserved Matters: following outline | |

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- application CB/11/03169/OUT dated 01/12/2011 with regard to appearance, landscaping, layout and scale at the former **Mellor Beauty Premises, Sunderland Road, Sandy, Beds**
- ii) **New Road Site adjacent to Tesco CB/13/00865/RM** Reserved matters for outline application CB/10/04356/OUT dated 01/08/2011 – all matters reserved except access and layout at land off **Station Road, Sandy, Beds.** ✓
- 6 Minutes of Committees and Sub-committees and recommendations**
To receive minutes of the following committees and sub-committees and/or (if applicable) to approve recommendations therein.
- 1 Development Scrutiny Committee on 11 March 2013 and 25 March 2011 X
 - 2 Policy, Finance and Resources Committee on 18 March 2013 ✓
- 7 Draft Strategic Plan**
To consider for adoption a draft strategic plan for Sandy Town Council (Cllr Pettitt) and to receive a report from the Clerk on matters arising therefrom ✓
- 8 Progress report on review of premises and staff structure**
To receive a report from the Clerk on progress. ✓
- 9 Annual Report**
To approve the draft annual report excluding accounts To follow
- 10 Finance**
- i) To approve the accounts for payment
 - ii) To receive a report showing income and expenditure against budget for the year to date To follow
- 11 Mayoral Nominations**
To discuss nominations ✓
- 12 Mayoral Communications**
To note the Mayor's engagements and any items for information ✓
- 13 News Release**

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REPORTS

5 Planning Matters

Items referred to Town Council by Development Scrutiny Committee:

i) From meeting on 11 March 2013

5.1 CB/13/00539/VOC Variation of Condition: to planning permission CB/11/03169/OUT condition 10 to reduce the width of footway/cycleway from 3M to 2M at **Former Mellor Beauty Premises, Sunderland Road, Sandy, Beds.**

CB/13/00542/RM Reserved Matters: following outline application CB/11/03169/OUT dated 01/12/2011 with regard to appearance, landscaping, layout and scale at the former **Mellor Beauty Premises, Sunderland Road, Sandy, Beds.**

It was resolved to defer consideration of these applications to a Town Council meeting as they were outside the remit of the committee and to contact the developers to arrange for them to attend a meeting to discuss the proposed development in more detail.

It has been arranged for representatives of the applicants to attend the Town Council meeting to answer any questions from members.

ii) From meeting on 25 March 2013

3.3 CB/13/00865/RM Reserved matters for Outline application CB/10/04356/OUT dated 01/08/2011 – all matters reserved except access and layout at land off **Station Road, Sandy, Beds.**

It was resolved to note that the application is outside the remit of the committee, though a recommendation to council would be made. The Chairman read out a viability statement, the statement included with the approved site layout and Section 106 agreement that the site is unviable as a commercially implementable scheme and if the scheme was to proceed it would result in a deficit of £973,485. The Committee would like to know what the developer is asking for, is it a loss of some of the affordable housing and a reduction in Section 106 monies. The Chairman would speak to the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk about the information to be gained and that information is gained from more than one source. The Committee would like the application with the information to go to the next meeting of Town Council. That Central Bedfordshire Council is contacted to inform them that the Town Council will be considering the application at its Town Council meeting on the 15th April and the Council has already discussed the application at the Development Scrutiny Committee meeting on the 25th March.

Any additional information available with regard to this application will be communicated to members as soon as it is known but none is available

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at the time of writing.

The Clerk has been advised that individual members may wish to raise the issue of traffic and footpaths in New Road possibly in the light of recent letters in the Biggleswade Chronicle. A report on these matters has not been prepared as the Clerk is not aware of any new information on this issue.

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6 **Minutes of Committees and Sub-committees and recommendations**

To receive minutes of the following committees and sub-committees and/or (if applicable) to approve recommendations therein.

- i) Development Scrutiny Committee on 11 March 2013 and 25 March 2013
Recommendations included in item 5 above.
- ii) Policy, Finance and Resources Committee on 18 March 2013
Recommendations:

5 Committee Arrangements, Scheme of Delegations and Calendar of Meetings 2013/14

It was resolved to recommend to Town Council that composition of all committees stayed the same except that there should be an HR advisory group composed of 5 members plus the Mayor which would meet quarterly and additionally on an ad hoc basis as necessary. Members with expertise in employment and HR matters would be encouraged to stand for election at the annual meeting. Substitutes would also be elected. The advisory group would report direct to Town Council.

It was resolved to recommend to Town Council that Wi-Fi be put in to the chamber and clerking of some meetings by staff other than the Clerk and the Deputy Clerk would be adopted.

It was resolved that the Chairman and the Clerk would make further minor adjustments ***to the calendar which would then be recommended to Town Council.***

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2013		
Mon 06.05.13	May Bank Holiday	
Mon 13.05.13	Town Council (Annual Meeting)	
Mon 20.05.13	Development Scrutiny	Policy, Finance & Resources
Mon 27.05.13	Bank Holiday	
Mon 03.06.13		
Mon 10.06.13	Development Scrutiny	Community Services & Environment
Mon 17.06.13	Town Council	
Mon 24.06.13	Human Resources	
Mon 01.07.13	Development Scrutiny	Policy, Finance & Resources
Mon 08.07.13		
Mon 15.07.13		
Mon 22.07.13	Development Scrutiny	Community Services & Environment
Mon 29.07.13	Town Council	
Mon 05.08.13		
Mon 12.08.13	Development Scrutiny	Policy, Finance & Resources
Mon 19.8.13		
Mon 26.08.13	Bank Holiday	
Mon 02.09.13	Development Scrutiny	Training Evening
Mon 09.09.13	Town Council	
Mon 16.09.13	Human Resources	
Mon 23.09.13	Development Scrutiny	Community Services & Environment
Mon 30.09.13		
Mon 07.10.13		
Mon 14.10.13	Development Scrutiny	Policy, Finance & Resources
Mon 21.10.13	Town Council	
Mon 28.10.13		
Mon 04.11.13	Development Scrutiny	Community Services & Environment
Mon 11.11.13		
Mon 18.11.13		
Mon 25.11.13	Development Scrutiny	Policy, Finance & Resources
Mon 02.12.13	Town Council	
Mon 09.12.13		
Mon 16.12.13	Development Scrutiny	Community Services & Environment
Mon 23.12.13	Human Resources	
Mon 30.12.13		
2014		
Mon 06.01.14	Development Scrutiny	Policy, Finance & Resources
Mon 13.01.14	Town Council	
Mon 20.01.14		
Mon 27.01.14	Development Scrutiny	Community Services &

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		Environment
Mon 03.02.14	Training Evening	
Mon 10.02.14		
Mon 17.02.14	Development Scrutiny	Policy, Finance & Resources
Mon 24.02.14	Town Council	
Mon 03.03.14		
Mon 10.03.14	Development Scrutiny	Community Services & Environment
Mon 17.03.14	Human Resources	
Mon 24.03.14		
Mon 31.03.14	Development Scrutiny	Policy, Finance & Resources
Mon 07.04.14	Town Council	
Mon 14.04.14	Development Scrutiny	Community Services & Environment
Mon 21.04.14	Easter Monday	
Mon 28.04.14		
Mon 05.05.14	Bank Holiday	
Mon 12.05.14	Development Scrutiny	Annual Parish Meeting

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6 Policies Complaints

It was resolved to recommend to Town Council adoption of the revised complaints policy with the draft vexatious complaints policy added as an appendix.

Draft Complaints Policy

1 Definition of a complaint:

"A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more Members of the public about the Council's action or lack of action or about the standard of a service, whether the action was taken or the service provided by the Council itself or a person or body acting on behalf of the Council." (Local Government Ombudsman)

2 This policy sets out Sandy Town Council's policy and procedures for dealing with complaints from Members of the public or organisations about its **administration and procedures**. In the first instance complaints should be made orally or in writing to: The Town Clerk Sandy Town Council, and 10 Cambridge Road Sandy SG19 1JE.

3 Different arrangements apply for the following types of complaint:

Type of conduct	Refer to
Financial irregularity	<p>Local electors have a statutory right to object to the Council's audit of accounts pursuant to S16 of the Audit Commission Act 1998. Sandy Town Council's auditors are:</p> <p><i>BDO LLP Arcadia House Maritime Walk Ocean Village Southampton SO14 3TL</i></p> <p>and they should be contacted directly in the event of an objection to the accounts.</p>
Criminal activity	<p>Any complaints or allegations of criminal activity should be referred to the Police:</p> <p><i>Bedfordshire Police Biggleswade Police Station Station Road</i></p>

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	<p><i>Biggleswade</i> <i>SG18 8AL</i></p>
Complaints about individuals	<p>Member conduct Complaints relating to a council member's failure to comply with Sandy Town Council's code of conduct must be submitted to Central Bedfordshire Council:</p> <p><i>Central Bedfordshire Council</i> <i>Priory House</i> <i>Monks Walk</i> <i>Chicksands</i> <i>Shefford</i> <i>Bedfordshire</i> <i>SG17 5TQ</i></p> <p>Employee Conduct Complaints about the individual behaviour of members of staff will be addressed using the Council's internal disciplinary procedure.</p> <p>Complaints should be made orally or in writing to:</p> <p>The Town Clerk Sandy Town Council 10 Cambridge Road Sandy SG19 1JE 01767 681491</p> <p><i>Or to</i></p> <p>The Town Mayor Sandy Town Council 10 Cambridge Road Sandy SG19 1JE 01767 681491</p> <p>if the complaint is about the behaviour of the Town Clerk</p>

- 4 In the first instance, if an oral or written complaint is made to the Town Clerk, a Councillor or the whole Council then the Town Clerk shall investigate the matter on behalf of the Council and report back to the complainant as promptly as possible. If Councillors are notified of oral

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complaints they will inform the Town Clerk within 2 working days. The Town Clerk will respond fully to complaints within 10 working days or provide an update and a reasonable timescale for when a final report on the complaint and any remedy shall be made available. The Council will first attempt to settle all complaints directly with the complainant.

- 5 If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the attempt to settle the complaint directly, then a further formal written complaint should be made in writing to the Town Clerk and the matter will be dealt with by the Complaints Committee of Sandy Town Council.
- 6 The Town Clerk or other nominated officer will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the committee established for the purposes of hearing complaints. This Complaints Committee will have five members and they will be elected at the annual meeting of the Town Council specifically for the purpose of hearing the complaint. If members of the committee elected at the annual meeting are unable to participate in the complaints hearing for any reason (eg conflict of interest, absence) the Town Council will appoint additional members to the committee.
- 7 Whenever possible the identity of the complainant will only be made known only to those who need to consider the complaint. However the general nature of the complaint may be published on an agenda. The complainant will be advised about what information is to be made public at this stage. The complainant shall be invited to attend the meeting to hear the complaint and to bring a representative with them if they wish.
- 8 Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the Council with copies of any documentation or other evidence relied on. The Council shall provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting and shall do so promptly, allowing the claimant the opportunity to read the material in good time for the meeting.
- 9 At the meeting the committee shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and the press. Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the meeting in public.
- 10 The chairman will introduce everyone and explain the procedure.
- 11 The complainant (or representative) should outline the grounds for complaint and thereafter, questions may be asked by (i) the Town Clerk or other nominated officer and then (ii) members. If the complainant (or representative) does not wish to speak the outline of the complaint

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provided in writing by the complainant will be used.

- 12 The Town Clerk or other nominated officer will have the opportunity to explain the Council's position and questions may be asked by (i) the complainant (or representative) and (ii) members.
- 13 The Town Clerk or other nominated officer and the complainant should be offered the opportunity to summarise their position.
- 14 The Town Clerk or other nominated officer and the complainant should be asked to leave the room while members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties shall be invited back into the room.
- 15 The Town Clerk or other nominated officer and the complainant should be given the opportunity to wait for the decision but if the decision is unlikely to be finalised on that day they should be advised when the decision is likely to be made and when it is likely to be communicated to them.
- 16 After the meeting the decision should be confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.
- 17 Appendix I at the end of this document lays out the Council's policy on dealing with vexatious or unreasonable complainants.
- 18 Pursuant to the Local Government Act 1974 the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) has no jurisdiction over parish and Town Councils in England consequently there are no statutory mechanisms in place for complaints against local Councils in England. Complainants who are dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaints procedure may consider the remedy of Judicial Review in the absence of any other appeal mechanism.

Appendix I Vexatious Complaints

- 1 Sandy Town Council welcomes feedback from members of the public and organisations about its activities and is committed to dealing with complaints fairly and impartially and in compliance with relevant legislation. Information relevant to our complaints procedures and to this policy can be found in the following documents:

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- Sandy Town Council Complaints Procedure
 - Sandy Town Council Code of Conduct
 - Sandy Town Council Dignity at Work/Bullying and Harassment Policy
 - Sandy Town Council Customer Care Policy
 - The Freedom of Information Act
- 2 All complaints will be dealt with using the appropriate procedure depending on the nature of the complaint.
 - 3 This policy sets out Sandy Town Council's policy and procedures for dealing with a very small minority of members of the public who may make complaints that are vexatious in that they persist unreasonably with their complaints or make complaints in order to make life difficult for the Council rather than genuinely seeking to resolve a grievance. This may involve making serial complaints about different matters, or continuing to raise the same or similar matters over and over again.
 - 4 The Council recognises that it is important to distinguish between people who make a number of complaints because they genuinely believe things have gone wrong, and people who are simply being difficult.
 - 5 The Council acknowledges that complainants will often be frustrated and aggrieved and it is therefore important to consider the merits of their case rather than their attitude.
 - 6 Similarly, even though someone has made vexatious complaints in the past, it cannot be assumed that the next complaint is also vexatious. Each complaint must be considered, and a decision made as to whether it is vexatious or genuine.
 - 7 A list of potentially unreasonable or vexatious behaviours is attached at Appendix 1 for guidance.

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- 8 If a complaint made orally or in writing to the Town Clerk, a Councillor or the Town Mayor is considered to be unreasonable or vexatious by them the Town Clerk or the Town Mayor may take the exceptional step of referring the complaint to Sandy Town Council so that it may be determined whether the complaint is unreasonable.
- 9 The complainant will be notified of the referral in writing.
- 10 The Town Council will consider the status of the complaint taking into account the guidance laid out in this policy. If the Council considers that the complaint is unreasonable it will notify the complainant in writing. The Town Council may decide that no further action can usefully be taken in response to the complaint and will inform the complainant making it clear that only new and substantive issues will be considered. If the complainant has regularly been taking up large amounts of Council resources the Council may decide to restrict the access of the complainant to Council Officers and any such restrictions will be confirmed in writing.
- 11 If the complaint is not found to be unreasonable then the usual complaints procedure will obtain.
- 12 At any time, if a complainant persists with a pattern of behaviour or volume of complaints which has an adverse impact on council resources a meeting may be offered to the complainant to establish whether there is an more effective way for concerns to be dealt with or whether there is an underlying common cause for various complaints.

Appendix II

Some examples of the behaviour of persistent complainants

- Refusal to specify the grounds of a complaint
- Making a complaint more than once about the same issue
- Refusal to co-operate with the complaints investigation process or insistence on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice
- Making what appear to be groundless complaints about the employees dealing with the complaints or attempting to use the complaints procedure to pursue a personal vendetta against an employee
- Making unnecessarily excessive demands on the time and resources of

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Council staff whilst a complaint is being looked into

- Refusal to accept information provided for no apparent good reason
- Changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation process goes on and/or denying statements he/she made at an earlier stage
- Making statements or providing manufactured 'evidence' the complainant knows are incorrect or persuading others to do so
- Raising at a late stage in the process, significant new information which was in the complainant's possession when he or she first submitted a complaint
- Introducing trivial or irrelevant new information or raising large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions and insisting they are all fully answered
- Lodging numbers of complaints in batches over a period of time, resulting in related complaints being at different stages of a complaints procedure
- Refusal to accept that issues are not within the remit of a complaints procedure or demanding outcomes which the complaint procedure cannot in itself provide such as the overturning of court decisions, dismissal or criminal prosecution of staff
- Electronically recording meetings, telephone calls and conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of the other persons involved
- Seeking to coerce, intimidate or threaten staff or other people involved, whether by use of language, tone of voice or behaviour including body language
- Submitting repeat complaints, after the complaints process has been completed, essentially about the same issues, with additions/variations which the customer insists make these 'new' complaints which should be put through the full complaints procedure.

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Community Engagement Strategy

It was resolved to recommend to Town Council approval of the amended community engagement strategy and to review this document further once a new strategic plan was adopted.

Draft Community Engagement Strategy

INTRODUCTION

Sandy Town Council wants to work closely with the public – residents, communities, businesses and voluntary organisations. Our aim is to engage with residents and encourage their participation in the local democratic process; creating a more active and informed community that is involved in decision making and securing better services.

AIMS

Sandy Town Council strives to undertake the following:

To enable an involved, empowered and active citizenship through:

- (i) involving residents in community issues
- (ii) informing local people
- (iii) engaging proactively with all sections of the community

To communicate information to our community clearly, factually and appropriately through:

- (i) a website detailing all council services and activities
- (ii) regular press releases and advertisements in local publications
- (iii) an annual report
- (iv) use of plain English
- (v) display of information on public noticeboards

To improve our communication with our partners and stakeholders and co-ordinate our community engagement efforts through:

- (i) supporting the work of statutory agencies in Sandy
- (ii) supporting the work of non-statutory organisations in Sandy
- (iii) maintaining positive working relationships with local organisations

To raise the image and reputation of the Council through:

- (i) inviting residents to be actively involved in meetings via the public forum
- (ii) publicising the Annual Town Meeting
- (iii) inviting residents/community groups to provide information for council publications
- (iv) issuing press releases covering activities of the council
- (v) encouraging the Mayor to represent the council and the community

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To enable every councillor to maximise their role as elected representatives and community leaders through:

- (i) the supply of a comprehensive new members pack
- (ii) provision of regular training and briefing for members
- (iii) encouraging councillors to attend meetings of community organisations and residents associations in their respective wards
- (iv) encouraging councillors to take up places on community groups and organisations
- (v) holding monthly councillor surgeries
- (vi) uploading of agendas, minutes and other information on the council website

To ensure every member of staff understands the council's role and priorities through:

- (i) publication of a strategic plan incorporating the council's goals
- (ii) development of a customer care programme
- (iii) the staff appraisal scheme
- (iv) encouraging staff to provide input into the decision making process
- (v) encouraging staff to represent the council at community events
- (vi) provision of regular staff training, continuous professional development and briefings

ENGAGEMENT

Sandy Town Council will work with individuals/organisations which seek to enhance the community.

(Draft prepared: March 2013

Review: following adoption of Strategic Plan)

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Travelling expenses

*A draft travelling expenses policy was revised as shown in the document attached to these minutes and it was noted that further amendments should be incorporated to accommodate those travelling by motor cycle or bicycle. **It was resolved to recommend** approval of the travelling expenses policy subject to these additional amendments.*

Draft Travelling Expenses Policy

- 1 All employees and members of council are entitled to claim for out of pocket expenses such as travel costs in the course of carrying out their responsibilities and duties.
- 2 Expense claims should be completed in writing using the appropriate forms and submitted to the Town Clerk for payment.
- 3 Employees and members are entitled to claim the same travelling allowances but the mechanisms for claiming are different.
- 4 Sandy Town Council will participate in the Government's cycle to work scheme at the request of any employee. The scheme is not available to those who are not directly employed by the Council.

Employees

- 1 Employees' expense claims will be authorised by the Town Clerk or in the case of the Town Clerk by the Town Mayor.
- 2 Employees will use the most economic form of travel in terms of cost and time, taking into account the different modes of travel, traffic and fares available.
- 3 Employees may claim direct reimbursement for 2nd class train fares, bus fares, taxi fares and car parking. Receipts should be provided whenever possible.
- 4 Employees whose terms and conditions of employment are those negotiated by the NALC/SLCC National Agreement may claim reimbursement for car, van, motor cycle or bicycle journeys using the current National Joint Council (NJC) recommended casual users expense table. Reimbursement will be made via salary payments and will be subject to income tax. Mileage rates will be determined by vehicle engine size (in the case of cars, vans and motor cycles) in accordance with the NJC scheme.
- 5 Employees whose terms and conditions of employment are not those negotiated by the NALC/SLCC National Agreement **or** who choose not to claim travelling expense under the NJC expense table may claim mileage up to the maximum permitted under the HMRC Fixed Profit Car Scheme.

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Travelling allowances for mileage incurred for business purposes will not be subject to income tax and will be reimbursed by cheque. The mileage rates will apply where personal cars are used for council purposes irrespective of engine size. The rate for cars, vans, motor cycles and bicycles will be that set by the HMRC.

- 6 When undertaking Council business employees are required to adhere to traffic regulations.
- 7 Any parking penalties or other liabilities that arise from the way the vehicle is used, particularly breaches of the Road Traffic acts, the Traffic Management Act and Motor Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations are the responsibility of the individual employee and must not be claimed as an expense to be reimbursed. This includes excess charges incurred (eg compound charges) by not buying such items as congestion charge tickets, car parking tickets, etc. Employees insured by the Council and/or required to hold a driving licence as a condition of their employment are required to notify the employer of any driving penalties imposed by the police or courts including fixed penalties and parking tickets in accordance with the policy laid out in the staff handbook.

Members

- 1 Members' expense claims will be authorised by Council through the usual procedure for approving all payments.
- 2 Reimbursable Mayoral and Member travel will be restricted to the Central Bedfordshire, Luton and Bedford Borough areas also St Neots, Godmanchester and other locations very close to the Bedfordshire county border. Travel to any other locations will be by Council approval only.
- 3 Members will use the most economic form of travel in terms of cost and time, taking into account the different modes of travel, traffic and fares available.
- 4 Members may claim direct reimbursement for 2nd class train fares, bus fares, taxi fares and car parking. Receipts should be provided whenever possible.
- 5 Members may claim reimbursement for use of personal cars or motor cycles for council purposes either using the using the current National Joint Council (NJC) recommended casual users expense table. Reimbursement will be made by cheque and will be subject to income tax. Mileage rates will be determined by vehicle engine size in accordance with the NJC scheme.

The Town Council will supply information to HMRC on the expense claims made under this scheme if requested however it is the responsibility of

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individual members to declare such income to HMRC themselves.

- 6 Alternatively Members may claim mileage up to the maximum permitted under the HMRC Fixed Profit Car Scheme. Travelling allowances for mileage incurred for business purposes will not be subject to income tax and will be reimbursed by cheque. The mileage rates will apply where personal cars are used for council purposes irrespective of engine size. The rate for cars, motor cycles and bicycles will be that set by HMRC.
- 7 Any parking penalties or other liabilities that arise from the way the vehicle is used, particularly breaches of the Road Traffic acts, the Traffic Management Act and Motor Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations are the responsibility of the individual member or employee and must not be claimed as an expense to be reimbursed. This includes excess charges incurred (eg compound charges) by not buying such items as congestion charge tickets, car parking tickets, etc.

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Customer Care

It was resolved to recommend approval of the revised customer care policy.

Draft Customer Care Policy and Service Standards

- 1 Sandy Town Council aims to satisfy its customers and this includes treating people properly and delivering a high standard of service and customer care in all areas of our work.
- 2 Customer Care involves putting customers first and respecting their rights, needs and views. The Council has many customers both external and internal. This policy relates to our most important group of customers: the people who live and work in Sandy.
- 3 This document is primarily intended for our employees but is made available to members of the public in the interests of transparency.
- 4 The Council will comply with the service standards described below.

SERVICE STANDARDS

Premises

Our reception areas and public rooms will be non-smoking, clean, tidy, safe, welcoming and comfortable.

Access will be provided, wherever possible, to customers with prams, pushchairs, wheelchairs and mobility disabilities.

We are striving to meet the needs of all people with disabilities.

Facilities

Our indoor and outdoor facilities will be well maintained and safe.

Access will be provided, wherever possible, to customers with prams, pushchairs, wheelchairs and mobility disabilities.

We are striving to meet the needs of all people with disabilities.

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Accessibility of our offices and officers

Our offices at 10 Cambridge Road, Sandy SG19 1JE are open from 9.30 am to 1 pm Monday to Friday and from 2 pm to 4 pm Monday to Friday.

Members of the public may “drop in” during this period or may telephone for an appointment at a specific time.

A request to see an individual officer will be responded to within three working days.

Drop-in visitors should not have to wait any more than 5 minutes before being seen. Specific members of staff may not be available during the drop-in sessions.

Customers attending a pre-booked appointment should not have to wait more than 5 minutes from the appointment time.

When our offices are closed due to public holidays or in other circumstances we will publicise this. On occasion the office may be closed without notice for operational reasons.

Contact by phone

Our offices provide a telephone service between 9 am to 5.00 pm Monday to Thursday and 9 am to 4 pm on Friday. Outside these times an answering machine is available.

We cannot answer all calls immediately because of our limited number of staff and phone lines. Telephone messages will be responded to within one working day.

Our telephone response will be courteous.

We aim to answer calls within 7 rings.

Website

Information about Sandy Town Council is available on our website www.sandytowncouncil.gov.uk

We aim to post agendas and reports to our website no less than 3 working days before our meetings.

We aim to post approved minutes of meetings within 5 working days of the

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meeting at which they were approved.

We aim to make the written information we send out easy to read and understand. We try to avoid the use of jargon, use clear and concise language, good layout and design, and readable type faces and print sizes.

Staff

The Town Council will ensure that our staff have the appropriate skills and knowledge to perform their jobs effectively.

All our staff will be tidily dressed.

Our grounds staff and our tourism advisers will wear uniforms.

Staff will be polite and constructive and will treat customers as they would wish to be treated themselves.

Staff will supply their names and job titles to customers when requested.

Communication and right to information

Sandy Town Council aims to make public as much information about its activities as is practicable and our primary channel for this is our website.

Sandy Town Council will also publish an annual report.

Customers have the right of access to personal information which we hold on them.

Customers also have the right of access to council information under the Freedom of Information Act.

Confidentiality

Sandy Town Council respects the legislation which requires it to keep personal information confidential.

The Council has security arrangements to prevent unauthorised access to our records and we aim to comply with the principles of good practice included in the Data Protection Act 1998.

Letters received from customers which are addressed to the Council as a body

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and which do not include personal information or a specific request to keep information confidential may be publicly disclosed.

Complaints

Sandy Town Council aims to give customers the best service possible but sometimes things go wrong. If customers have a complaint we will try to put things right and apologise if we have made a mistake.

The Council has a formal complaints procedure which is on the Council's website and will be provided to customers who are not satisfied.

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Minutes

*Minor amendments were made to the draft policy and **it was resolved to recommend** approval of the minutes policy as shown in the attached document.*

Draft Minutes Policy

- 1 This policy sets out practical procedures and lawful practice for dealing with minutes of Sandy Town Council meetings and the meetings of its committees and sub-committees. It does not apply to notes taken at working groups or other meetings.
- 2 Minutes will follow a standard format as laid out in Sandy Town Council's minute protocol.
- 3 Minutes will be composed by the appointed minute taker at a meeting on the basis of contemporaneous notes. The minute taker may be the clerk, another officer or a designated member of council who is nominated to act as minute taker in the absence of an officer. In the absence of officers the minute taker may be the chairman.
- 4 All notes taken by the minute taker at a council, committee or sub-committee meeting will be subject to inspection under the Freedom of Information Act (as are all notes taken by all members and officers during meetings).
- 5 Draft minutes may be shown to the chairman of the meeting by the minute taker before circulating the draft minutes to other members of the meeting.
- 6 Draft minutes will be circulated to all members of the body which held the meeting (whether they were absent or present at the meeting) at the earliest opportunity.
- 7 If the draft minutes are not available until the day of the next meeting of the body, the minutes of the meeting may not be taken as read but will be read out to the meeting prior to approval.
- 8 Draft minutes will be published on the Council's website as soon as practicable.
- 9 The draft minutes will be considered and any suggested amendments to them will be proposed and voted upon in accordance with current standing orders.
- 10 Draft minutes may only be approved by resolution of the body (council, committee or sub-committee) which held the original meeting of which the minutes form a record.
- 11 Decisions contained within draft minutes may be implemented before the minutes are approved.
- 12 Recommendations contained within draft minutes may be referred to the relevant body for approval before the minutes are approved.

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- 13 Once formally approved minutes will be published within 5 working days and will be posted on the Council's website.
- 14 Approved minutes of a sub-committee will be reported to the parent committee at the next available committee meeting for noting.
- 15 Approved minutes of a committee will be reported to the next available meeting of Town Council for noting.

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8 Financial Matters

iii) Investment Strategy

It was resolved to recommend adoption of the treasury management policy as shown in the attached document ie with the level of general reserve set at 40% of the annual precept.

The proposed treasury management policy is shown below.

Draft Treasury Management and Investment Policy and Practices

- 1 Sandy Town Council defines its treasury management activities as "the management of the Council's cash flows, its banking, its investment transactions and the effective control of the risks associated with those activities, and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks".
- 2 The borrowing of monies purely to invest or lend and make a return is unlawful and this Council will not engage in such activity.
- 3 The Council will only enter into long term borrowing through the Public Works Loan Board when absolutely necessary for essential major works or capital purchases.
- 4 A general balance/reserve will be maintained to protect the Council from unforeseen events and to give time to respond to such events. The Council will work towards maintaining a general balance/reserve equivalent to 40% of the annual precept.
- 5 The Council will aim to reduce reliance on use of reserves when setting future years' budgets and work towards increasing its general reserve to a recommended minimum level as indicated above at point 4.
- 6 Additional earmarked reserves may be accumulated for the purpose of specific projects.
- 7 The general policy for the Council is the prudent investment of its treasury balances. The Council's investment priorities are:
 - i) The security of capital and
 - ii) The liquidity of its investments
- 8 The Council will aim to achieve the optimum return on its investments commensurate with the proper levels of security and liquidity.
- 9 The Council will maintain one or more business deposit bank accounts providing instant access to funds, with no minimum deposit or balance

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and no penalties for withdrawals. These accounts will be used for the deposit of at least 50% of the Council's general reserve. Earmarked reserves and the remainder of the general reserve may be invested separately in accordance with 10 below.

10 The Council will invest in bank deposits but may also consider investment in gilts. Reserves will be invested through the Council's bankers in short term deposit accounts or short term cash based investment bonds. The period of time for which funds may prudently be committed will be determined by the Town Council with advice from the Responsible Financial Officer both of whom shall properly assess the risk of committing funds to longer term investments.

It was resolved to recommend to council that the level and allocation of earmarked reserves be reviewed and approved.

The Clerk has not yet had the opportunity to prepare a report on the level and allocation of earmarked reserves and it is proposed that this recommendation is approved and implemented at a future Town Council meeting.

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7 Draft Strategic Plan

The task group set up to develop a Strategic Plan for the council has met on four occasions and prepared a draft document for consideration which will be introduced by the Chairman of the group.

The Clerk would like to draw attention to the following items which have been raised by members and which are relevant to the proposed action plan.

Replacement of Town Council Skoda

The maintenance costs of this elderly vehicle continue to increase. The vehicle was not replaced last year partly because of the problem of overnight secure storage of a replacement vehicle. A like for like replacement (which is recommended by the Clerk and Deputy Clerk) could not physically be accommodated inside the premises at Stratford Road.

A quotation for a replacement vehicle was obtained on 17.12.2012 and the total on the road price at that time was £16,043.51 (including VAT of £2,628.92 which would be reclaimed from HMRC). But no progress can be made until decisions are made about the cemetery and yard redevelopments.

Reduction of Precept Tax Base

In consideration of the strategic plan and the action plan which derives from the strategy members will be mindful that in 2014/15 it is very unlikely that any support grant will be provided to counteract the effect of the changes to Sandy's tax base which impacted on precept in 2013/14.

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Draft Strategic Plan for Sandy Town Council

Introduction

The aim of this document is to outline the overarching strategy of Sandy Town Council. As well as providing a public statement of the council's objectives and priorities; this document will help councillors and officers to cross check individual decisions against the cohesive strategic plan.

Sandy Town Council recognises that, in addition to potential changes in the composition of the council at each election, there may be legislative and economic changes which affect this strategy and so it will be subject to further review on an annual basis prior to the budget setting process adopted by the Council.

The strategy has been compiled using input from members, officers and residents (including via consultation for the Sandy Town Plan). Sandy Town Council welcomes all comments on its strategic direction at any time.

Sandy is a small market town in north east Bedfordshire located astride the heavily used Great North Road (A1) in between the growing communities of Biggleswade to the south and St Neots to the north. The surrounding landscape is dominated by a range of hills known as the Sand Hills and Sandy is nestled in the break where the Greensand Ridge meets the Ivel Valley. To the east of the town is the east coast mainline railway used by many commuters. Recent housing development in Sandy has generally taken place to the north of the town centre. To the south of the town the River Ivel meanders through water meadows and fields close to the hamlet of Beeston which is bisected by the A1. The population of Sandy was recorded as 12,600 in the 2011 Census.

The town's proximity to Bedford, Biggleswade and St Neots and the recent and continuing growth of these settlements has meant that many residents travel outside Sandy for shopping, work and entertainment.

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Purpose, Vision and Mission

Purpose

Sandy Town Council exists to serve and represent the interests of the whole community of Sandy and to work for provision of services for its residents. Sandy Town Council will work with organisations or people willing to improve the well-being and prospects of the community.

Vision Statement

To make Sandy a town to be proud of and a good place to live.

Mission Statement

Working together to enhance our community

Overall Objectives

Sandy Town Council will

- encourage more engagement with local people and groups and develop a shared sense of identity and community participation
- develop and improve the community of Sandy including service and amenity provision to, for and by that community
- work with partners to develop a vibrant, economically sustainable and safe town centre

Sandy Town Council

- welcome visitors and promote awareness of the amenities and activities within the area
- work to preserve the distinctive identity and character of Sandy and the surrounding landscape
- communicate effectively and strive to represent the whole community
- strive to ensure value for money in all its operations
- recruit and retain a high quality workforce and provide opportunities for staff development and training
- retain its Quality Parish Council status and its General Power of Competence

Values

Sandy Town Council aspires to:

- Work for the community not ourselves
- Be honest and transparent in all our activities
- Do everything we can to provide excellent services and encourage our partners to do the same within a culture of continual improvement

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- Treat customers and colleagues with fairness and respect
- Take pride in our community and ourselves
- Make the best possible use of the resources available and empower our staff to be effective
- Focus on outcomes rather than processes
- Engage in real partnership,
- Be open to constructive criticism and change

Strategic Plans

In order to achieve its objectives the Council has divided its activities into four main areas and set out its strategy for each of these. These plans in turn are each supported by a corporate action plan which sets out what the Council aims to do in the near future. The action plans make reference to the relevant overall objectives which affect each area of activity.

1 Community

Most Relevant Objectives:

1.1 encourage more engagement with local people and groups and develop a

Sandy Town Council

shared sense of identity and community participation

1.2 develop and improve the community of Sandy including service and amenity provision to, for and by that community

Sandy Town Council is close to our community and will provide local leadership aimed at improving and enhancing the well-being of all.

The Town Council will endeavour to hear, understand and articulate the needs of all parts of our community from young people to the elderly.

The Town Council will work closely with those voluntary, business and community groups which both directly and indirectly provide support to our community. The Town Council will promote opportunities for volunteering and will encourage the development of a resilient social infrastructure.

The Town Council will work in partnership with the principal authority and other statutory agencies to help the community to secure a better deal on local services and a stronger voice in decision-making. The Town Council will also work with these and other partners to promote community safety in Sandy and the wider area.

The Town Council will provide information and share news about local issues. Information will be provided through the Council's website, annual report, and in other ways.

The Town Council will encourage and support cultural, sporting and other leisure activities which benefit the people of Sandy.

The Town Council will support initiatives which promote the development of healthy lifestyles within the community.

2 Economy

Most Relevant Objectives:

2.1 work with partners to develop a vibrant, economically sustainable and safe

Sandy Town Council

town centre

2.2 welcome visitors and promote awareness of the amenities and activities within the area

Sandy Town Council will encourage and seek to secure the economic growth of the town so that future prosperity is assured for residents and businesses.

The three main industries of employment for Sandy residents are:

- Wholesale and retail
- Manufacturing
- Health and social work

(ONS 2011 Census)

The Town Council recognises the need to support these activities whilst encouraging additional economic development.

The Council aims to pursue policies which will encourage inward investment in the town, promotion of local businesses and greater use and range of local facilities.

The Town Council will work with other relevant agencies to promote employment opportunities, growth and sustainable development which benefit the economic health of Sandy. Sandy Town Council will work with those in the community who wish to see a revival of the market town identity of Sandy. The Council also wishes to promote the visitor economy in Sandy

There are pockets of significant economic deprivation within the town of Sandy¹ and the council will work to improve access to benefits, services and amenities for residents in these areas.

3 Environment

Most Relevant Objectives:

¹ (including LSOA 433¹ one of the 20%-40% most deprived in the UK)

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3.1 develop and improve the community of Sandy including service and amenity provision to, for and by that community

3.2 work to preserve the distinctive identity and character of Sandy and the surrounding landscape

Sandy Town Council seeks to ensure that economic or physical development of Sandy is sympathetic and appropriate to the strong identity and character of the town which is provided by its natural and built heritage.

With this in mind the he council will review and comment on planning applications forwarded to them by the Planning Authorities.

Sandy Town Council will participate in formal consultations which affect the future environment of the town.

The Town Council will seek to preserve Sandy's Walkers are Welcome accreditation and promote walking, cycling and sustainable transport in the area.

The Town Council will promote wider access to and development of public transport provision. The Town Council will support initiatives to reduce traffic congestion and environmental damage in the Town Centre, to reduce on street parking and to improve road safety

The Town Council will work with relevant agencies concerned with improving the physical environment of the town.

The Town Council will maintain an environmental policy for its own activities aimed at reducing any negative impact on the biodiversity of the area.

4 Democracy

Most Relevant Objectives:

4.1 communicate effectively and strive to represent the whole community

4.2 strive to ensure value for money in all its operations

4.3 recruit and retain a high quality workforce and provide opportunities for staff

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development and training

4.4 retain its Quality Parish Council status and its General Power of Competence

Sandy Town Council consists of an elected body of local people and so provides a strong, local voice on all decisions, services and issues which affect the everyday life of people in this community.

The Council has obtained Quality Council status and will continue to comply with revisions to the Quality Parish Council Scheme in order to meet the highest standards of good practice within the local council sector.

The Council has confirmed its eligibility for the General Power of Competence which gives it the opportunity to provide a wider range of local services. The Council will embrace new opportunities for local service delivery provided by the Localism Act 2011. The balance of cost and benefit in providing any services will be carefully assessed in order to ensure best value to the tax payers of Sandy.

Sandy Town Council will be transparent in all its activities and will publish as much information about its decision making as possible. The Town Council will facilitate the full participation of the community in the decision making process. The Council wants every citizen to believe that their opinion counts.

All members of Sandy Town Council will commit to comply with the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council and will undertake relevant training in their capacity as councillors.

Action Plans 2013/15

1 Community

- 1.1 *Encourage more engagement with local people and groups and develop a shared sense of identity and community participation*

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- Increase participation in Annual Town Meeting
- Delivery of Christmas lights and community event
- Strengthen partnership working initiatives
- Deliver additional community events Eg Get involved fair
- Sustain aspects of civic life, eg civic service, activities of Town Mayor (subject to clarification of Town Council)
- Support the establishment of a Good Neighbour Scheme
- Maintain website and communication through other media

1.2 *Develop and improve the community of Sandy including service and community provision to, for and by that community*

- Close current allotment site and continue work to secure new site
- Develop cemetery extension project and review management of cemetery and use of chapel
- Improve Stratford Road yard and outbuildings, review vehicle and plant provision
- Review Tourist Information service provision and integrate with council administration
- Review management of Pinnacle and Riddy
- Pursue Community Orchard project, Beeston
- Improvements to Fallowfield Public Open Space
- Review Skate Park management agreement

2 Economy

2.1 *Work with partners to develop a vibrant, economically sustainable and safe town centre*

- Develop communications between Town Team, Chamber of Trade, businesses and councillors
- Review market development
- Monitor changes of occupancy in Town Centre premises

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and respond appropriately

- Review effectiveness of Closed Circuit Television
- Support Conservation Area Appraisal initiatives
- Support ethical trading initiatives

2.2 *Welcome visitors and promote awareness of the amenities and activities within the area*

- Review Tourist Information Centre provision
- Continue to support Walkers are Welcome steering group
- Improve access to Roman Sandy exhibits and promote Sandy's Roman heritage as a visitor attraction
- Maintain nature reserves and open spaces
- Develop working relationship with RSPB

3 Environment

3.1 *Develop and improve the community of Sandy including service and community provision to, for and by that community*

- Promote access to the countryside by working in partnership with other organisations to develop the Sandy Green Crescent and improvements to footpaths and open spaces
- Secure new allotment site
- Review tree management
- Pursue Community Orchard project, Beeston
- Maintain and improve play facilities
- Review management and use of Beeston Green Common Land
- Review management of Town Centre Car Park
- Improve Fallowfield Public Open Space

3.2 *Work to preserve the distinctive identity and character of Sandy and the surrounding landscape*

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- Review environmental policy for all Sandy Town Council operations
- Support Conservation Area Appraisal initiatives

4 Democracy

4.1 *Communicate effectively and strive to represent the whole community*

- Review community engagement strategy, publish and implement
- Maintain website, post weekly news updates
- Publish all financial documents and transactions over £500 on website
- Widen distribution of annual report
- Council representatives on external bodies to provide written and informative reports to council on a regular basis
- Increase attendance at Town Meeting, councillor surgeries and town council meetings
- Improve physical public accessibility to meetings (eg including provision of hearing loop, PA system and appropriate room layout)

4.2 *Strive to ensure value for money in all its operations*

- Review existing council activities and levels of service provision
- Consider opportunities for new and alternative service provision
- Review use of all premises and make 10 Cambridge Road more widely available to the community
- Review staff job descriptions and staff structure
- Strengthen contract and lease monitoring
- Develop and adopt an investment strategy which maximises the Council's resources whilst retaining a prudent level of reserves

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4.3 *Recruit and retain a high quality workforce and provide opportunities for staff development and training*

- Review staff job descriptions and staff structure
- Enable Town Clerk to concentrate on management and implementation of council policies
- Provide appropriate training and support for all staff

4.4 *Retain quality Parish Council status and general power of competence*

- Implement Council's statement of intent with regard to training
- Provide appropriate training and support for all councillors and staff
- Facilitate work of councillors by reducing number of meetings and by providing Wi-Fi and accessibility improvements to 10 Cambridge Road
- Actively encourage community wide interest in council elections and provide appropriate information for potential candidates

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8 Progress report on review of premises and staff structure Clerk's Report

The temporary working group set up to consider the review of premises at 10 Cambridge Road met on 26 March 2013 to inspect the offices and discuss options. It was agreed to ask a local builder for preliminary informal advice on structural matters. Cllr Sharman has contacted two space consultancy and quotations are to be obtained. Date of next meeting is not yet confirmed.

The Clerk and some Councillors have expressed concern that the review of premises should not be undertaken in isolation from the review of staff structure and job descriptions previously agreed by Council since the two processes should run in parallel. It has been proposed that a second temporary working group to address this is set up as soon as possible. Cllrs Runchman and Walsh have expressed interest in working on this project.

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9 Annual Report

The annual accounts for 2012/13 will not be finalised in time for the Town Council meeting. However the annual report (minus accounts) will be circulated in draft form before the meeting and follows as soon as possible. It is hoped to have the report ready for the Annual Town Meeting on 27 April 2013.

10 Finance

- iii) accounts for payment
- iv) To receive a report showing income and expenditure against budget for the year to date

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11 Mayoral Nominations

Clerk's Report

Members are invited to nominate candidates for Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor for the year 2013/14. Whilst nominations may be considered and discussed in advance, the Town Mayor and Deputy Mayor cannot be elected until the designated Annual Meeting of Sandy Town Council on 13 May 2013 and formal nominations for both offices must be made as the first item of business at that meeting.

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12 Mayoral Communications

24.2.13	Attended the Mayor of Leighton-Linslade's Civic Service with Mr Sutton.
1.3.13	Attended World Women's Day at Beeston Methodist Church.
2.3.13	Accompanied by Mr Sutton attended the Mayor of Kempston's Charity Fun Quiz at Centenary Hall, Kempston.
3.3.13	With Mr Sutton attended the Mayor of Houghton Regis' Civic Service at Houghton Regis Baptist Church.
3.3.13	Attended the Chairman of Central Bedfordshire Council concert in Dunstable with Mr Sutton.
9.3.13	Attended the launch of the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme, along with several Councillors.
13.3.13	Attended the Bedfordshire Schools Cross Country Relay races.
16.3.13	Attended the Eve fundraising event at the Village Hall.
17.3.13	Attended the Mayor of Stotfold's Civic Service at St Mary's Church, Stotfold, accompanied by Mr Sutton.
22.3.13	Attended with Mr Sutton the Mayor of Huntingdon's Charity Dinner at Huntingdon Town Hall.
24.3.13	Attended the Mayor of St Ives Charity Indian Cuisine Buffet at P R Massala, St Ives with Mr Sutton.
30.3.13	Attended the Easter Story Trail at Sandy Baptist Church.
30.3.13	Attended Wood Green Auction in Cambridge with Mr Sutton.

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7.4.13	Started the Sandy 10 Road Race and along with Cllr Colin Osborne presented the prizes to winners.
14.4.13	Hosted the annual Sandy Mayor's Civic Service at Sandy Baptist Church.
Deputy Mayor	
24.3.13	With Mrs Osborn attended the Mayor of Flitwick's Civic Service at St Peter & Paul Church, Flitwick.

Letters to:

Viking Cubs Jack Smith, Joe Bryan, Lewis Jackson, Jamie Parkes, Nathan Costin and Jake Blissett for earning their Chief Scout Silver awards.

Euan Dickson-Earle and Tom Boggon of Biggleswade Athletic Club for their achievements at the England Indoor Championships in U20 60m hurdles and U17 men's triple jump.

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