

Sandy Town Council

Minutes of the meeting of Sandy Town Council held in the Council Chamber at 10 Cambridge Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire on Monday 24th January 2022 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs P N Aldis, P Blaine, A Gibson, J Hewitt, T Knagg, R Lock, C Osborne, M Pettitt (Chair), P Sharman and S Sutton.

Absent: Cllrs A M Hill, W Jackson, M Scott and N Thompson.

In attendance: CBC Cllrs C Maudlin, T Stock, Mr C Robson (Clerk), Mrs C Baker-Smith (Admin Team Leader) and one member of the public.

The Chair confirmed that the COVID wording on Agendas would be removed from next week and that Members and the public could wear masks if they so wished.

Action

1 Apologies for Absence (175-2021/2022)

Apologies had been received from Cllrs A Hill, W Jackson and M Scott.

Admin

2 Declaration of Interest and requests for dispensations (176-2021/22)

- (i) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests – None.
- (ii) Non-Pecuniary Interests – None.
- (iii) Dispensations – None.

3 Public Participation Session (177-2021/22)

The Clerk said he had received an email from Mr Stephen Allen asking two questions.

1. When considering the need to increase the Town Council's portion of council tax due from April, what thought was given to the 158 children and their families in Sandy – 244 if you include surrounding villages – supported by the Need Project; any increase for them will be 'unwelcome' at best and possibly the final straw for some. With this in mind will councillors re-consider the recommendation of Policy Finance & Resources Committee so as to lower even delete any increase?
2. When considering Sandy's application to CBC's Highway Improvement Scheme, will due regard be given to the 'long list' of improvements as accepted by CBC in the Local Area Traffic Plan and can CBC provide an update on how many of these have been completed and how many are short listed?

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While it is noted the promise to update LATPs on their expiry seems to have been dropped by CBC, will they remain included in the LTP and so be carried forward when this is next reviewed?

Members were asked to keep these questions in mind at relevant parts of the agenda.

4 Minutes of previous Town Council Meetings (178-2021/22)

Members considered the minutes of a meeting of Sandy Town Council held on Monday 13th December 2021 and the minutes of the Special Meetings of Sandy Town Council held on Monday 10th January 2022 and Monday 17th January 2022 and **RESOLVED** to approve them as a correct record of proceedings. The Clerk said that he had amended Item 3 of the minutes on Monday 17th January 2022 to read Election to the Human Resources Committee on the file and digital copies.

5 Minutes of Committees and Recommendations therein (179-2021/22)

To receive and note the minutes of the meetings of the following committees and sub-committees and (if applicable) to approve recommendations therein which do not arise elsewhere:

- i) **RESOLVED** to receive and note the minutes of the Development Scrutiny Committees held on 13th December 2021.
- ii) **RESOLVED** to receive and note the minutes of the Community Services and Environment Committee held on the 20th December 2021.

The **RECOMMENDATIONS** from this meeting will go to the next Policy, Finance & Resources Committee.

- iii) **RESOLVED** to receive and note the minutes of the Human Resources Committee held on the 20th December 2021.
- iv) **RESOLVED** to receive and note the minutes of the Policy, Finance and Resources Committee held on the 10th January 2022.

Members noted a recommendation from the committee on the 2022/23 budget and precept and that this recommendation would be considered under agenda item 6.

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- v) **RESOLVED** to receive and note the minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Human Resources Committee held on the 12th January 2022.

6 Correspondence (180-2021/22)

The Chairman brought forward agenda item 13 appendix iv) for consideration, as a member of the public was present to speak on the matter.

Item 13 appendix iv) Communication from Central Beds Council's Partnership Team on 'The Bell' public house, which is a registered Asset of Community Value.

Mr McWeir, a resident of Sandy and member of CAMRA, informed the Council that an application that The Bell continue to be an Asset of Community Value will be submitted. Mr McWeir stated that he hoped the Council would support the application. A new licensee is now in residence and the pub would be re-opening. Mr McWeir spoke on the social value of the building and the role it plays in the community.

Members agreed that the decline of public houses in Sandy over the last 10 years was regrettable and that the Bell is an important asset for the town. The pub is situated in a prominent place in Sandy opposite the station, and if the licensee were to be open more and be able to offer facilities to the public that were not available at the station ie. refreshments etc, it could become even more of a valuable asset to the town.

Members spoke on their support for the application.

It was proposed, seconded and **RESOLVED** to support CAMRA's application to Central Bedfordshire Council that The Bell pub be re-registered as an Asset of Community Value.

7 Co-option for Vacancy of Fallowfield Ward (181-2021/22)

The Chairman confirmed that Cllr Stuart Paterson had resigned from the Town Council and that following the statutory process, CBC had confirmed that a co-option could now take place.

Members received and noted correspondence from Central Beds Council on the procedure for filling the vacant councillor seat in the Fallowfield Ward. Members also noted that applications from candidates will be invited to be considered at the next meeting of the

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Full Council on 7th March 2022.

8 Reports from Central Bedfordshire Councillors (182-2021/22)

Cllr Stock reported:

Covid - new cases were rising, particularly in the 9-10 age group, with 1 in 22 in central Bedfordshire having tested positive, as well as the 11-15 year olds.

Health - BLMK CCG have reported that the vaccination uptake is still good, although there has been a decrease since the New Year.

Winchester Road Regeneration – Most of the current planned work has been completed, although some planters that require attention are still to be looked at. Highways are looking into some preventative measures to stop the parking on the verges.

Cllr Stock had received a letter from a young person regarding green issues on the Beeston Green. It was agreed that the Mayor would meet with the young person to discuss their ideas.

The proposed parking restrictions for Kings Road, Sandy will be considered by a meeting of CBC's Traffic Management Committee on 1st February 2022. It was noted that Cllr Hewitt was attending on behalf of STC.

Cllr Maudlin informed Members that CBC expected to hear back from the DfE in regards to releasing Sandye Place from its educational status by June 2022.

Ward Grant - Cllr Maudlin said that there is a small amount left for distribution, if any Councillors knew of community groups that might be interested.

A Member said that the road sweeper truck had missed Mill Lane and Swan Lane, potentially because of parked cars. Cllr Stock said that they only do the main roads but would take the question back to Central Beds Council. She also said the gutter clearing takes place every 2 years.

Cllr Maudlin commented that the street and dog watch schemes were now live and happening around Sandy. The need for more patrols in Fallowfield to address rising complaints of anti-social behaviour was highlighted.

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9 Interim Audit Report (183-2021/22)

Members received a letter and report from the Council's appointed internal auditor following a review of the Council's internal process in November 2022.

It was proposed, seconded and **RESOLVED** to receive the internal auditor's report.

10 2022/23 Budget and Precept (184-2021/22)

Members considered a recommendation from the Policy, Finance & Resources Committee on the 2022/23 Budget and Precept. Agreement of the precept was required to meet CBC's deadlines.

The Chair of the PF&R Committee briefed Members on the budget which had been presented and discussed at the last four meetings of the PF&R committee. All councillors had had the opportunity to go through the budget line-by-line and consider where decreases or savings could be made.

The Chairman of PFR commented that some Councillors had expressed concern that STC's portion of the Council tax bill was higher than CBC's, however it is important to remember that while that might be the case in percentage terms, in monetary terms it is a lot smaller. STC, like other authorities is facing challenges to its budget from increased costs for services, materials and utilities which it has to factor into a balanced budget.

The committee had reduced a number of revenue budgets, totaling over £8,500 in budget reductions. However, there were areas of cost which are outside of the Council's control due to RPI or contractual increases. The Council could go through the budget again, line-by-line but it would need to look at cutting funds for those non-essential activities it might wish to do, such as tree planting, events, or Christmas lights.

The Council could look to reconsider its purchase of an electric vehicle, but a new vehicle is needed, and this cannot be put off. The Council has already made commitments to making more environmentally friendly choices, this is an opportunity to do so and is a key action in the environmental plan.

It was commented that STC is currently 9th in terms of precept rates in Central Bedfordshire and has worked hard to reduce costs where it can. Unlike other towns, Sandy's tax base is not increasing. Over a five-year period, the tax base only increased by 1.6%, compared to

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other towns and neighbouring parishes where the increases were between 5.65% to 33%. While other Councils can use the increased income from additional properties to help offset cost increases, Sandy cannot.

It was proposed and seconded that the Council approve the budget and precept as recommended by the Policy, Finance and Resources committee.

Members referred to the Member of the public's query on families supported by the Need Project, which is regrettable in all communities. STC has provided grants annually to the Need Project and look to support the valuable initiative in any way it can. This help can make a lot of difference and more of an impact than a reduced precept, given what this represents in monetary terms.

A Member commented that desirable actions/activities would not need to be cut out if the Council used some underspend to fund the required increases in the budget. Other Councillors argued that using the underspend would mean that the increase in revenue budget still needs to be found in future years, potentially compounding the problem and making the next budget year more of an increase. The Council reserve needs funds available to allow it to respond to match funding and grant opportunities, which provide benefits to the town.

The Chairman commented that the bulk of funds held was for projects and although grant funding has been sought for things such as the skatepark, the Council may still need to contribute to ensure the project is a success.

A recorded vote was requested.

For – Cllrs Gibson, Hewitt, Knagg, Lock, Osborne, Pettitt, Sharman, Sutton

Against – Cllr Aldis

Abstained – Cllr Blaine

RESOLVED that the 2022/23 budget and precept as set out in the papers submitted to the Council be approved. The 2022/23 budget will result in a budget increase of £28,764 and a total precept of £628,120. The Precept per Band D Equivalent will be £154.86, which will be a £5.62 (3.77%) increase per Band D Equivalent based on the previous financial year.

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11 Action List (185-2021/22)

Members received and noted an action list on Full Council items.

East West Rail Link: The Clerk had received an email and would circulate the same to Members. A new group was being set up and one Member from local councils could be nominated to attend.

It was proposed, seconded and **RESOLVED** that Cllr Blaine would attend.

A1-Local Issues: The Chair reported that there would be a meeting on Thursday 27th January at 6.30pm via Zoom. The Chair, Cllr Gibson, the Clerk and CBC Cllr Maudlin to attend. Notes of the meeting will be circulated to all Members.

SPA: Cllr Maudlin said that news from DfE should be issued in June 2022. The Clerk said he was attending a site meeting on Wednesday 26th January 2022 regarding Sandy Carnival and the STC Jubilee event being held on the site.

A further meeting with the single point of contact at CBC will be organised for updates on any Sandy related CBC matters.

12 Leisure Services Jenkins Pavilion Proposal (186-2021/22)

Cllr Aldis reported that the Heads of Terms had been drafted. STC had provided further feedback to CBC and was now awaiting an updated version, along with a template lease and management agreement. The lease would be for 99 years, and a break clause was being considered.

The Chairman commented that a stakeholder meeting between the sports clubs and CBC was being held tonight to discuss the day-to-day matters around the Jenkins Pavilion operation and use.

13 Neighbourhood Development Plan (187-2021/22)

Members received and noted a report from the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

Cllr Gibson briefed Members and said that a Zoom meeting was being held on Tuesday 25th January 2022 with Sarah Morgan of CBC. Members views would be welcomed and that the Town Council should engage with the process in the next year. The Chair thanked the group for the report.

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14 Correspondence (188-2021/22)

- i) Members received and noted an email from the Head of Primary Care Development and Transformation at the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group. This is in response to a letter sent to the CCG from the Council.

Members agreed that the response was inadequate. Cllr Stock said that she is working closely with the health organisations and will send an email to the Clerk explaining the position. It was agreed to wait for Cllr Stock's email and then consider further.

- i) Members received a communication from Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service's Consultation Budget and Action Plan. The Clerk said that this would be shared on Facebook for residents and Members to answer the survey.
- ii) Members received correspondence from Central Bedfordshire Council's Traffic Management Team regarding a Highway Improvement Scheme and applications from Town and Parish Councils. Members noted the quick turnaround dates and after discussion it was agreed that a Working Group consisting of Cllrs Gibson, Sutton and Blaine would carry out an exercise to identify possible topics for an application.
- iii) Members received correspondence from the Police and Crime Commissioner's office in relation to a Council cluster meeting and to confirm attendance. The meeting would be on Wednesday 16th March at 6.30pm via Microsoft Teams.

It was proposed, seconded and **RESOLVED** to agree in principle.

15 Consultations (189-2021/22)

Members noted that Central Bedfordshire Council are currently consulting on their 2022/23 budget.

16 Reports from Councillors on Outside Bodies (190-2021/22)

- i) Members received and noted the report from the Sandy Carnival Committee. A Member suggested sharing facilities between the Carnival and the Jubilee events.
- ii) Members received and noted the report from the SSLA. The Chairman reported that the lighting had been completed and that the contractors had been paid. The Xmas event had gone well and

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that new recruits to the SSLA would be needed after the AGM in May.

- iii) Members received and noted the report from Sandy Twinning Association. The Chair reported that it was a good meeting and that previous Mayor, former Cllr Geoff White sent his best wishes to all.

17 News Release (191-2021/22)

- Co-option of new councillor
- Precept

18 Chairman's Items (192-2021/22)

The Chair said that he had sent a letter of congratulations to Cllr Paul Mackin of Shefford Town Council on his MBE in the New Year's Honours List.

The Chairman reported that Cllr Lock had passed on the PCC's thanks to the Town Council for their support towards the Christmas lights in the churchyard.

The Chairman informed all Members that communication had been received about the potential closure of the gap/crossing in the A1 at Upper Caldercote. This is something the Council should follow given its concerns about the gap at Beeston and other issues along Sandy's stretch of the A1.

The Chairman reminded Members that there was to be a demonstration of the new electric vehicle the Council had agreed to purchase, on Wednesday 26th January at 11am, for anyone who would like to attend.

19 Mayoral Engagements (193-2021/22)

The Mayor thanked everyone who attended the Carol Service before Christmas.

20 Date of Next Full Council Meeting (194-2021/22)

Monday 7th March 2022