

Sandy Town Council

Minutes of the meeting of Sandy Town Council held in the Council Chamber at 10 Cambridge Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire on Monday 15th April 2024 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs P N Aldis, S Baker, B Blackley, A Effiong, J Hewitt (Chair), R Lacey, C Osborne, M Pettitt, M Scott and P Sharman

Absent: Cllrs A Lock, R Lock, S Sutton and N Thompson.

In attendance Mrs. N Sewell (Clerk), Ward Cllrs S Bell and R Pashby

Action

- 1 Apologies for Absence (234-2023/2024)**
Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs A Lock, R Lock, Sutton, Thompson and Ward Councillor Ford.
- 2 Declaration of Interest and requests for dispensations (235-2023/2024)**
 - i) *Disclosable Pecuniary Interests* – None
 - ii) *Non-Pecuniary Interests* – Cllr Sharman declared an interest in Item 8 as the Council’s Representative on the Carnival Committee
 - iii) *Dispensations* – None
- 3 Public Participation Session (236-2023/2024)**
No members of the public were present.
- 4 Minutes of Meeting of Town Council (237 – 2023/2024)**
Receive the Minutes of Meeting of Sandy Town Council held on Monday 4th March 2024 at 7.30pm to approve them as a correct record of proceedings.
RESOLVED to approve them as a correct record of proceedings.
- 5 Minutes of Committees and recommendations therein (238-2023/2024)**
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 Committee meeting held on 4th March and 25th March. It was noted that an updated version of the Minutes for 25th March was circulated to Members at the meeting.

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- ii) **RESOLVED** to receive and note the minutes of the Policy, Finance and Resources Committee held on 8th April 2024 and agree the following recommendations:
- That all committees, working groups, Councillors and staff are reminded that there is an approved budget process which should be followed.
 - All bids for additional funding should be presented to PF&R in the Autumn for discussion and inclusion – or not – in the budget for the following year.
 - That the supply of milk reverts to the previous method of staff buying it from the local shop as this is more cost effective and results in less product waste than having milk delivered from the local dairy. The change to delivered milk had been made by the CS&E Committee to help align with its Environmental Plan aspirations and reduce the use of plastics but had proved counterproductive in terms of cost and waste.

To approve a spend of £29,215 for Play Equipment repairs at Bedford Road Recreation Park and Fallowfield Play Park as a matter of priority and as recommended by CS&E. It was noted that concerns were raised regarding the request for these funds so early into the new financial year as it was not believed that these costs had been brought to Council before the budget setting process. Following queries by some Members of the Council that came after the meeting of PF&R regarding this, the Clerk had been able to signpost those Members included in the communication to Agenda Item 7 on the PF&R Meeting held on 23rd October 2023, Capital Expenditure, where a required spend of £22,000 for Fallowfield Play equipment had been raised and also minute **(56-2022/23)** where it had been suggested that the money come from 2022/23 budget. The Clerk also explained in that communication that as the team had found it difficult to source companies both willing to do the work and quote for it actions had been delayed, hence bringing it back to Council at this juncture. Cllr Osborne commented it would be useful if all Members had been included in the Clerk's response.

Cllr Osborne also mentioned the £5,000 donation that had been given to the Town Council from Anglian Water and that as a decision on what to spend that money on had not been made, consideration to use it for budget overspends might be required.

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In addition, an agreement to bring the next meeting of PF&R forward to be held on 17th June, rather than 24th June to align with deadlines set by the Annual Governance and Accountability Return should be highlighted.

- iii) **RESOLVED** to receive and note the minutes of the Community Services and Environment Committee held on 25th March 2024 and agree the following recommendations:
- That before the Carpark Working Group does any further work on introducing charges for car parking a discussion be held at the next Full Council on the proposal that no work is done on car parking charges for the next 6 months (not 12 months as stated in the agenda) for the following works to take place:
 - i. To take the barrier out
 - ii. To have the EV charging points installed
 - iii. To monitor the car parking situation and assess the need for parking charges (*see item 14*).
- iv) **RESOLVED** to receive and note the minutes of the Human Resources Committee held on 18th March 2024 and agree the following recommendations:
- That Council adopt NALC's new Model Contract.
 - That the incremental pay rise agreed be implemented from 1st April 2024 (back dated where necessary). *It should be noted that the Civic Officer and Community Engagement Officer are not eligible for an incremental rise as neither will complete their six-month probationary period until June 2024.*

It was noted that the Clerk had sought advice from PNC regarding the need to consult staff about the change in Contract and she reported that as there was little change to the contracts other than two employee enhancements regarding an extra day's annual leave and the ability to carry over 5 days leave to the following year, there was no need for consultation.

Cllr Aldis left the meeting at 19:54 and returned at 19:55.

6 Reports from Central Bedfordshire (239-2023/2024)

Cllr Bell apologised for not submitting a report prior to the meeting and explained that she had been working on a report for the Annual Town Meeting to be held on 22nd April. She reported that the issues of blocked drains on Stratford Road that had been

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causing flooding issues in the area were being addressed. Officers had rodded the area and only one drain, which had been missed in the initial works which took place in February, now remained in need of clearing. Improvements in the area had already been noticed.

Cllr Pashby reported that he had been working hard with the Speedwatch initiative and volunteers had already conducted two sessions on the High Street where 507 vehicles had been tracked, 7 of which were doing more than the 20mph speed limit and a further 2 were driving at more than the 10% tolerance. The Police would be writing to the drivers of each vehicle. Similarly, on Good Friday volunteers had tracked 500 vehicles along Bedford Road, but none of them had been speeding. He added that other areas would be monitored over the next few weeks.

Incidences of drag racing along Sunderland Road have been reported and the Community Policing Team are investigating it.

Along with several utility boxes and a shop window, Highways speed signs had been vandalized with graffiti. Cllr Pashby reported that the graffiti would be removed soon and that anyone noticing further incidence of graffiti should report them via Fix My Street. Cllr Bell commented that someone in the community must know who was responsible and urged anyone with information about the perpetrator to report it to the police. Members were told that a kind resident had agreed to remove the graffiti from the utility boxes.

Cllr Aldis raised an issue regarding difficulty in obtaining a permit for the green waste collection, and asked Ward Councillors how long the delay in getting a permit would be. Cllr Bell stated that if people had applied and paid for the permits, they could still put their bin out until that permit arrived. The waste collection operatives had a list of permit holders so would know who had paid for a permit and would empty their bin accordingly.

Members commented on a block on the A1 due to heavy traffic getting to the Tidy Tip and suggested this was a result of CBC's decision to charge for green waste collection. Cllr Bell responded saying that there was always heavier use of the Tidy Tip around this time of year and during the Easter holidays as it was a traditional time for people to spring clean their homes and start working on their gardens. She added that if the traffic didn't

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settle, however, she would alert Highways. She added that unlike other neighbouring unitary councils who charged for bins, CBC had always offered bins free of charge.

Cllr Pettitt asked if there was any update on Sandye Place? He commented that the Town Council used to get regular updates, but these had tailed off.

Cllr Bell said that Cllr Mark Smith the Executive Member for Adult Social Care had reported at a meeting on 15th April that he would be undertaking a recce of the site in June to look at its suitability for being the location of a new Care Home to replace the current one in Sandy. She said the news had been a shock as she had not had an update since the last meeting where STC, the Neighbourhood Plan and CBC had discussed the future of the site and it had been made clear that there were no current plans for the area. Cllr Hewitt concurred and said the group had been assured that nothing would come forward until the Executive Committee meeting in June. It was agreed that both Cllr Hewitt and Cllr Bell would communicate with Cllr Steven Watkins, the Executive Member for Business, Housing and Public Assets, on the matter.

Members requested that a letter go to the Leader of the Council Adam Zerny, to express Members' concerns on the matter. It was also requested that Richard Fuller MP be contacted on the same issues.

Cllr Bell commented that all Ward Councillors for the area cared deeply about the future of Sandye Place and said it was important that Ward Councillors and Town Councillors worked together on this.

7 Request to use Sunderland Road for Parking (240-2023/2024)

Members considered a request from Simon Ford, Chair of Sandy Tigers FC to allow them to use the bottom end of Sunderland Road Recreation ground for parking during their tournament on 18th and 19th May 2024. The request has been deferred from the CS&E Committee Meeting on 25th March **(107-2023/24)** due to concerns over charges being asked of car users for this service. In the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair of CS&E, Cllr Osborne clarified that the request was to find out what the charge would be.

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He also asked the Clerk if the Cricket Club had been consulted and she was able to confirm that they had but officers were still awaiting their response.

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RESOLVED to refer back to CS&E and if no objections from the Cricket Club were received then parking in the area for the tournament would be allowed, but that Sandy Town Council would reserve the right to overturn the decision a week ahead of the event if wet weather threatened the condition of the ground.

8 Grant Application (241-2023/2024)

To consider a grant application from Sandy Carnival for £312 to pay towards costs of hired toilets for the Sandy Carnival event on Saturday 15th June.

RESOLVED to pay a grant of £312 to the Sandy Carnival and to send a reminder to all organisations that make a regular grant application of the upcoming PF&R Committee meeting dates so that grants could be considered in a timely fashion.

Admin Team
Leader

9 East West Rail (242-2023/2024)

Members discussed the latest updates regarding East West Rail. Cllr Aldis reported that the only updates on the matter were:

1. the Questionnaire concerning Land and Property, which had been circulated to Members separately.
2. An alternative route that had been proposed by the Mayor of Bedford.
3. That the Government had reaffirmed its commitment to delivering EWR in full in the 2024 Spring Budget by announcing that £240 million in existing funding would be made available to fast-track works on the MVL (Oxford to Bedford Services).

RESOLVED to note the updates.

10 Reports from Councillors on Outside Bodies (243-2023/2024)

Members received the following reports from Council representatives on outside bodies;

- i) Cllr Sutton – AGM Minutes of 22nd Sandy Air Cadets circulated to Members prior to the meeting
- ii) Cllr Hewitt – Village Hall Management Committee – gave a verbal report saying that the Committee was making progress and talking to Sandy Bowls Club about their potential use of the back bar facilities. It had been agreed that fees due from back rent would also be paid. She reported that the Social Club had now run out of draught

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beer and was now closed. The Village Hall from hereon is only supplying bottled beer to support the Bowls Club. She added that bookings had been made by the Sandy Secondary School for mock and actual exams to be held at the facility, as well as for use as a Polling Station for the upcoming OPPC election in May, all of which were bringing in an income. She added that they were still struggling to sign up volunteers and that at the moment she was managing the bookings herself.

- iii) Cllr Hewitt – gave a verbal report on the most recent Police Priority Setting meeting. She said it had been a positive meeting and that the group had heard various reports from across the county about speeding, noisy cars and bikes and graffiti. Chief Inspector Grant Maxted said the police were looking into the meaning of the 33 symbol that had been spray painted around the town and believed it could be related to a far-right group, but this was yet to be confirmed. The meeting also received a presentation from the Serious Organised Crime Group, which Cllr Hewitt said contained some shocking reports. Our local policing team had been successfully addressing anti-social behaviour in Sandy and how this could relate to various other crimes. Since the closure of one house, they have already seen a marked reduction in the incidents taking place. Unfortunately, Tesco and the High Street shops had seen an uplift in shoplifting and theft, however all shops were now on the radio link connection.
- iv) Cllr Pettitt – SSLA – report circulated to Members prior to the meeting.
- v) Cllr Pettitt – Twinning Association – A report had been circulated to Members with an update on the Twinning Association and Cllr Pettitt asked the Council how they would now want to take the Association forward. He said the Association had passed the test of time but possibly a difficult decision needed to be made, especially given point 3.2 of his report that stated, 'Were there to be an AGM now all those presently involved would stand down and not seek re-election.' Alluding to this point Cllr Osborne commented that he felt it had come to the point when the Association should be dissolved. Cllr Bell suggested that STC contact Ampthill Town Council, which still had a thriving Twinning Association and see if there was anything STC could learn from them. Finally, Cllr Hewitt suggested a way forward where the Association could remain, but without the requirement to travel, should be explored.

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RESOLVED to note the reports.

11 Pinnacle & Riddy Working Group (244-2023/2024)

Members received the Minutes of the Pinnacle and Riddy Working Group and considered the following recommendations:

- To consider the following question from the Biggleswade and Hitchin Angling Association Ltd regarding fees for fishing rights at the Riddy, 'how does the fee the Association pays differentiate them from anyone else fishing (either legally or illegally) in the area, and how are the fees raised used?'
- Agree to allow a bull to graze on the Riddy again during the next season on the same understanding, and with the same health & safety measures in place, as previously agreed.
- Accept the Draft Grazing Agreement.
- STC and Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity to set up a meeting to discuss the future of the Riddy Management Agreement following the announcement that the Bedfordshire Wildlife Trust wish to step away from the relationship at the end of 2024/25.
- Meet with the Internal Drainage Board regarding damage to the area following works to clear ditches. Some of which needed to be rectified before cattle can be allowed to graze on the site again from 15th May.
- Consider removing the knee rail on the Riddy that has collapsed. CBC originally installed it to assist wheelchair users along with an accessible fishing platform and accessible kissing gate. The knee rail either needs repairing, depending on need, or removing. Replacement will be costly so the need should be established before any decision is made.
- To agree £500 towards repairs to fencing, new posts and barbed wire, with works to be completed before 15th May to ensure cattle are not able to escape.
- Provision of £1,000 would be needed to undertake the pollarding of three trees by Girtford Bridge, with the work needed to be completed this year.

RESOLVED to agree to the Bull being grazed on the Riddy with other cattle as per the past two years' arrangements and for the knee rail at the Riddy to be removed. It was also agreed that a cost of £500 be paid to BRCC towards the repairs to fencing and barbed wire before cattle entered the Riddy on 15th May and £1,000 provisioned for the pollarding of three willows by Girtford

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Bridge. All other matters covered in the minutes of the Pinnacle & Riddy Working Group meeting would be taken to the next CS&E Committee meeting as the parent committee for the working group and to allow costs for other works to be explored.

Cllr Scott also made a comment about being shocked to hear about the experience of Bailiffs on the river, and the need for them to be armed with defence spray and stab vests. He added that river and fishing related crime and breaches were happening right under the Town Council's noses and that the matter needed to be raised with the police.

12 Notice of Consultation – Solar Farm (245-2023/2024)

Members received notice of a Public Consultation regarding a new solar energy project to be located in Sandy. The consultation will take place on Tuesday, 30th April 2024, from 3pm to 7pm at The Roundabout Club, Bedford Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 1EL, where the plans for the solar farm will be presented and the project team will be gathering feedback from the community.

RESOLVED to note the report. The Community Engagement Officer would be asked to publicise the consultation event through the Town Council's engagement channels. Members were encouraged to respond as individuals as well as a corporate body during the planning process.

Community
Engagement
Officer

13 Jenkins Pavilion Development Update (246-2023/2024)

Members noted that the following paperwork has been completed, signed, and returned to Central Bedfordshire Council:

- Deed of Variation SSLA
- Profitshare Agreement
- Side Agreement
- Lease

Also to note the Management Fees for 2024/25 are £19,675.32 for the year, however as works are set to be completed by September 2024 some saving would be made.

RESOLVED to note the report, and that due to STC forecasting a reduced need for Management fees in 2024/25 the saving on this would not be £10,000 as suggested by CBC. STC had already reduced the budget line to £9,500 in anticipation of the reduced cost.

14 Car Park Management (247-2023/2024)

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To agree further actions for the Car Park Working Group regarding the ongoing management of the car park including the potential for car park charges.

RESOLVED that before the Carpark Working Group does any further work on introducing charges for car parking a discussion be held at the next Full Council on the proposal that no work is done on car parking charges for the next 6 months (not 12 months as stated in the agenda in order for the following works to take place:

- i. To take the barrier out
- ii. To have the EV charging points installed
- iii. To monitor the parking situation and assess the need for parking charges (*see item 5 iii recommendation*).

15 Action Plan (248–2023/2024)

Members reviewed and agreed Full Council Action Plan for 2023/24.

RESOLVED to note the Action Plan and make the following updates:

- Sandye Place Academy – the Mayor to request a date for the next meeting with CBC
- Allotments at Beeston – to follow up on any movement with Steven Mooring
- Christmas Lights Event – to update for the 2024 event.

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16 Correspondence (249-2023/2024)

Members received a list of correspondence sent to the Town Council since the last meeting of Full Council and any actions arising from such items. All correspondence was circulated to Members separately.

RESOLVED to note the correspondence.

17 Mayoral Engagements (250-2023/2024)

Members received a report showing the Mayor's and Deputy Mayor's Engagements since the meeting of Full Council on 4TH March 2024

RESOLVED to note the report.

18 Press Releases (251-2023/2024)

- Civic Service Round Up
- Spring Market
- Annual Town Meeting

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- Solar Farm Consultation Event
- Co-Option

19 Chairman's Items (252-2023/2024)

There were none.

20 Date of Next Meeting (253-2023/2024)

Annual Town Meeting – 22nd April 2024

Annual Town Council Meeting – 20th May 2024

The meeting closed at 21.36.