

Sandy Town Council

Minutes of the meeting of Sandy Town Council held in the Council Chamber at 10 Cambridge Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire on Monday 10 April 2017 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs P N Aldis, P Blaine, T Cole, A M Hill, W Jackson, T Knagg, C Osborne (Mayor), M Pettitt, M Scott, P Sharman and S Sutton

Absent: Cllrs J Ali, G Leach, D Sharman and J Sparrow and CBC Cllrs C Maudlin and P Smith

In attendance: Cllr T Stock (CBC), Mr C Robson (Clerk), Mrs C Baker-Smith (Admin Team Leader) and 4 members of the public

	Action
1 Apologies for Absence (158-2016/2017) Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs Ali, Leach, D Sharman, Sparrow and Cllr C Maudlin (CBC).	Admin
2 Declaration of Interest and requests for dispensations (159-2016/2017) i) <i>Disclosable Pecuniary Interests</i> - None ii) <i>Non Pecuniary Interests</i> - None iii) <i>Dispensations</i> - None	Admin
3 Public Participation Session (160-2016/2017) There was one question and this would be raised at Item 11 on the Agenda.	
4 Presentation to Mayor's Charity – Canine Partners (161-2016/17) The Mayor welcomed Ray Bylett from Canine Partners which is one of the Mayor's chosen charities for this year. He then spoke on the work of the charity and introduced Carol who was training a new puppy called Milo also in attendance for the charity. The Mayor then presented Mr Bylett with a cheque for £500.00 from the Mayor of Sandy's Charity Account which was received with thanks.	
5 Minutes of previous Town Council Meeting (162-2016/2017) RESOLVED to receive the minutes of the Meeting of Sandy Town Council held on Monday 27 February 2017 and to approve them as a correct record of proceedings.	Admin

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6 Minutes of Committees and recommendations therein (163-2016/2017)

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 note the minutes of the Human Resources Committees held on the 6 February and 6 March 2017.

ii) **RESOLVED** to note the minutes of the Development Scrutiny Committees held on 13 March and 27 March 2017.

The Chairman reported that a licence had been granted for a Micro-pub subject to various conditions. He also reported that an application for The Bell Public House to be listed as an "asset of community value" had been granted following an application by CAMRA.

iii) **RESOLVED** to note the minutes of the meeting of Community Services & Environment Committee held on 13 March 2017.

iv) **RESOLVED** to note the minutes of the meeting of Policy, Finance & Resources Committee held on 27 March 2017 with the amendment that Item 5 be amended to January instead of December.

7 Financial Matters (164-2016/2017)

i) **RESOLVED** to note a summary statement of income and expenditure against budget for the year to date (previously circulated and scrutinised at a meeting of Policy, Finance and Resources Committee on 27 March 2017).

ii) **RESOLVED** to note a list of payments made since the last Town Council meeting (previously circulated and scrutinised at a meeting of Policy, Finance and Resources Committee on 27 March 2017).

8 Reports from Central Bedfordshire Councillors (165-2016/2017)

Members had received a copy of CBC Council's notes for Town and Parish Councils in advance of the meeting.

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Cllr Stock reported that there were currently two priorities being speeding and a request for visible policing. She said that a white van in Waverley Avenue, Sandy was being vandalised and she was waiting to be updated on the situation.

A member said that the Council ought to be consulted regarding CCTV in the town as he felt that the Council was being left behind with having up to date cameras. The Clerk stated that Central Beds Council would be contacting the council regarding new cameras and costs and this would be taken to a Community Services & Environment Committee.

9 **Benchmarking Results (166-2016/17)**

The Chairman welcomed Mike King to the meeting. Mr. King presented his findings from the town bench mark survey which was carried out in January 2017. Mr King started by detailing the national picture before looking at the results of Sandy's survey. Sandy falls into the 'small town' category. The presentation focused on the executive summary and some of the findings were summarised;

- 45% of the ground floor units in the town centre are A1 shops, this is 7% lower than the national average. Those A1 shops mainly sell comparison goods which is in line with the national small town average. Two thirds of the A1 shops in the town are unique to Sandy.
- 9% of the units in the town centre were vacant at the time of the survey. This is the same as the national average for small towns. The average throughout all towns in the country is 11%.
- In terms of reasons for use Sandy replicates the national small town average, with 40% of users visiting the town for convenience shopping and 27% to access services.
- 81% of those surveyed visited the town centre at least once a week.
- 61% of users stayed in the town centre for less than an hour, 19% higher than the national small town average.
- Overall 16% of car parking was vacant during the busy day audit, which is noticeably lower than the average of 24%. This was the same on the quieter day the survey was carried out. The British Parking Association puts 15%

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as the vacancy rate benchmark for the correct level of policy and provision.

- Convenience for users was rated as a positive aspect of the town centre, with 94% of post codes gathered by businesses living within 30 minutes drive.
- 63% of town centre users rated access to services as a positive aspect of Sandy.
- Crucially 54% of people asked would not recommend a visit to Sandy town centre which was 19% higher than the national average.
- Footfall in Sandy is 47% lower than the national average.
- 39% of users spend more than £10 on a normal visit to the town centre, this is 20% lower than the national average.
- Nearly two thirds of users classed retail offer as a negative aspect of Sandy, this is 11% higher than the national average.
- 53% of users reported leisure facilities as a negative, which is 23% higher than the national average. Improving food and drink offer was a key theme to emerge from the report.

The Chairman thank Mr. King for his presentation and invited comments and questions.

A Member queried the car parking statistics and noted that the Co-op car park was included. This is just for customers of the shop and could present an inaccurate reflection of available parking. Mr. King said he would amend the survey to exclude the Co-op parking.

A Member asked about the comparisons drawn with other towns. Comparing Sandy to towns such as Stratford upon Avon seemed unrealistic. Mr. King explained that Sandy fell into the small towns category as the number of retail spaces in the town was below 250. All other towns below 250 units are within the same category.

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Members held discussion about the results and it was agreed that the report held some useful information but that much of it was not unexpected. Sandy has a great deal of takeaway shops, and Members supported how hard business owners work to provide such services to residents. However, there is a shift in Sandy from retail to leisure and there needs to be a good offer available to residents if this is the way the town is to develop. There is a desire to protect the retail we have, while also encouraging new and varying businesses to take on vacant units. A member suggested contacting landlords to ask them to get involved in attracting a different variety of shops to Sandy.

Reverend Davies offered the church as a venue for events if this would help increase leisure and cultural offerings in Sandy.

A member of the public said that the High Street was difficult to negotiate for shoppers with HGV's going through the town. Mr King said that this had had no negative impact on their visit.

It was suggested that the Community Plan Working group could use the report to propose ideas for the community plan and that it come back to a committee meeting to discuss how the benchmarking can be used.

10 Action List (167-2016/2017)

Members received and noted the Action List.

11 Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Sustainable Transformation Plan – Healthcare Consultation Event (168-2016/2017)

- i) Members received and noted both reports from Cllr Blaine and Pettitt.

Cllrs Blaine and Pettitt went through their reports and both expressed concerns about the proposals impact on Bedford Hospital.

- ii) Members received the BLMK discussion paper and the Clerk said that the Council can still comment even though the deadline had passed.

A member of the public stated that he felt strongly that Bedford Hospital's status should be protected and there should be no downgrading. He questioned the Town Council's stance on the matter and what Council

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would be doing to represent Sandy and the interests of its residents. Bedford's maternity ward was extremely good and valued by not only Sandy, but surrounding towns and parishes. There is no other practical alternative for residents of Sandy.

He asked whether the Town Council could get in touch with neighbouring Councils to seek their opinions and submit a joined-up response to the consultation.

Members discussed the matter and agreed that the Cygnet wing was a valuable resource which should not be downgraded or put at risk. While there could be some case for specialist treatments moving to 'hub sites', it is essential that residents have access to services such as maternity and emergency care. The downgrading of these departments at Bedford leaves Sandy residents with no practical alternative.

It was proposed and seconded to **RESOLVE** that the Council respond to the consultation to keep maternity and A&E services at Bedford hospital and that they need to clarify what happens practically on the ground.

Town Clerk

The Clerk was asked to ascertain both Potton and Biggleswade Town Councils' views on the consultation.

Town Clerk

A Member said that this issue should be put on a future Bedfordshire Association of Town & Parish Councils meeting agenda.

Cllr Blaine

It was stated that a Case of Change document was already in place.

12 A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet Improvements (169-2016/17)

Members received and noted a communication from Highways England. It was proposed and seconded to **RESOLVE** that Option A be put forward.

Town Clerk

13 Government's Housing White Paper (170- 2016/2017)

Members received a NALC policy document highlighting relevant sections of the Government's recently published Housing White Paper and it was proposed and seconded to **RESOLVE** that Members respond individually to the Government's questions by the 28 April 2017.

Members

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14 Crime Statistics February 2017 (171-2016/2017)

The crime statistics were received and noted and after discussion several points were raised:

1. A Member asked if the Clerk had received any feedback from the Police and Crime Commissioner, he had not and would chase this again. There was also no police presence at the Annual Town Meeting.
2. A Member stated that they had attended a police event which asked residents to report all incidents to them. There was also an online webchat available to residents and this information would be added to the Council's page in the next edition of The Bulletin.

Town Clerk

Admin

15 Christmas Lights Switch On Event (172-2016/17)

The Clerk's report was received and noted. The Mayor said that there were two options for the future of the event which were:

- i) To expand the Friends of Sandy Christmas Lights Committee.
- ii) For the office to take on the administration of the event, with adequate resources.

After discussion it was proposed and seconded to **RESOLVE** that the office take on the administration of the event with more resources (either more volunteers to assist or another member of staff to be employed) and that this be discussed at the next Friends of Sandy Christmas Lights Committee meeting on the 26 April 2017.

16 Central Bedfordshire Council Recycling Behaviour Change (173-2016/2017)

This item was noted.

17 Reports from Representatives on outside bodies (174-2016/2017)

There were no reports.

18 News Releases (175-2016/2017)

None.

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19 Chairman's Items (176-2016/2017)

The Mayor reported on recent visits to the Army Cadets HQ and Sandy Upper School which were both informative and interesting. He thanked Cllr Stock for arranging the school visit.

The Civic Service was held on the 2nd April 2017 at St Swithun's Church and the Mayor said the church was full and the service was very good.

Cllr Hill expressed Members congratulations to the Mayor for taking part in the Sandy 10 Race on the 26th March 2017.

20 Date of Next Meeting (177-2016/2017) Monday 22nd May 2017

The meeting closed at 10pm.