

# Sandy Town Council

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## **Minutes of a meeting of the Policy, Finance and Resources Committee of Sandy Town Council held in the Council Chamber at 10 Cambridge Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire on Monday 18 March commencing at 7.30 pm**

**Present:** Cllrs Aldis, Jackson, Osborne (Chairman), Pettitt, Runchman, Scott, Sharman and White

**Absent:** Cllr Walsh

**In attendance:** Cllr Ali was in attendance. The Town Clerk was in attendance.

### **1 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Walsh and were noted.

### **2 Declarations of interest**

- i) DPI- none
- ii) Personal Interests - none

### **3 Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the Policy, Finance and Resources Committee held on 21 January 2013 had been circulated before the meeting.

**It was resolved** to approve the minutes as a correct record of the proceedings.

### **4 Minutes of HR Sub-committee**

- i) The minutes of the Human Resources Sub-committee meeting held on 18 February 2013 had been circulated in advance of the meeting and **it was resolved** to note the minutes and to approve the recommendations therein as follows.
- ii) **Item 5 Training It was resolved** to approve the recommendation that training for the NEBOSH General Certificate in Health & Safety previously sanctioned by Town Council for the Clerk would not now proceed as the level of qualification was deemed too high
- iii) **Item 7 Employee Handbook It was resolved** to approve the adoption of the recommended changes to the employee handbook as laid out in the minutes of the HR Sub-committee of 18 February 2013. A draft policy regarding severe weather arrangements was tabled at the meeting and **it was resolved** to approve this policy for inclusion in the employee handbook also.
- iv) **Item 8 Grievance Report Outcomes It was resolved** to approve the recommendation that training for members should be

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scheduled when time permits.

- v) **Item 9 Review of operation of HR Sub-committee arrangements** This recommendation was considered together with other issues under the next item of business.

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

The committee discussed feedback received from all committees of the council about the organisation and arrangements for meetings which had been circulated before the meeting. The use of substitutes was discussed in some detail.

**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.

A revised calendar of meetings for 2013/14 was discussed. It was noted that this still incorporated 46 meetings but these had been condensed into 29 evenings. The addition of two "extra" meetings was considered. It was resolved to add two possible training dates to the schedule. Alteration of the Town Council dates in June and September was discussed but the Clerk asked that the June date remained for reasons of keeping to deadlines. **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.

## 6 Policy Review

The committee considered several new/revised policies for adoption.

### i) Complaints policy

The complaints policy was revised as shown in the document attached to these minutes. **It was resolved** to recommend to Town Council adoption of the revised complaints policy with the draft vexatious complaints policy added as an appendix.

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## ii) **Revised Community engagement strategy**

The draft community engagement strategy was revised as shown in the document attached to these minutes. **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.

## iii) **Travelling expenses policy for members and employees**

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.

## iv) **Revised Grievance policy**

It was noted that this item had already been dealt with under item 4.iv above.

## v) **Revised customer care policy**

A revised customer care policy was amended as shown in the document attached to these minutes. **It was resolved** to recommend approval of the revised customer care policy.

## vi) **Minutes policy**

A report from the clerk and a proposed minutes policy had been circulated before the meeting and were discussed. 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.

## 7 **Financial Matters**

### i) **Financial Report**

A detailed financial report showing income and expenditure against the revenue budget for the financial year to date (financial year 2012/13) has been circulated and was considered. **It was resolved** to approve the report.

### ii) **Accounts**

A list of accounts for payments was tabled and **it was resolved** to approve the accounts for payment.

### iii) **Investment Strategy**

A report from the clerk and a draft Treasury Management policy had been prepared and circulated before the meeting. Following considered discussion **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. **It was resolved** to ask the clerk to obtain further investment advice from the council's current bankers on the basis that the council wished to invest £200,000 for 3-5 years in line with the adopted treasury management policy. **It was resolved** to recommend to council that the level and allocation of earmarked reserves be reviewed and approved.

### iv) **Year End**

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The committee noted arrangements for the year end procedures and external audit.

## **8 Property Matters**

The committee considered issues concerned with the potential alterations and improvements to the premises at Cambridge Road. A range of views were expressed. It was noted that any aspirations for change should be reasonable as root and branch remodelling was not feasible and considerable sums had already been spent on 10 Cambridge Road in the past. **It was resolved** to form a small working group to develop a clearer understanding of the problems with utilization of the existing premises and a vision of how this could be improved within a reasonable budget. The working group was to be composed of Cllrs Ali, Jackson, Osborne and Runchman and the clerk and a meeting date was to be agreed immediately after the meeting. The committee noted that there was no intention to consider removal to other premises at this time.

**Draft polices referred to in the minutes are shown below**

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## 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
<b>Financial irregularity</b>	<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</i> <i>Arcadia House</i> <i>Maritime Walk</i> <i>Ocean Village</i> <i>Southampton</i> <i>SO14 3TL</i></p> <p>and they should be contacted directly in the event of an objection to the accounts.</p>
<b>Criminal activity</b>	<p>Any complaints or allegations of criminal activity should be referred to the Police:</p> <p><i>Bedfordshire Police</i> <b>Biggleswade Police Station</b> <i>Station Road</i> <i>Biggleswade</i> <i>SG18 8AL</i></p>
<b>Complaints about individuals</b>	<p><b>Member conduct</b> Complaints relating to a council member's failure to comply with Sandy Town Council's code of conduct must</p>

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	<p>be submitted to Central Bedfordshire Council:</p> <p><i>Central Bedfordshire Council Priory House Monks Walk Chicksands Shefford Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ</i></p> <p><b>Employee Conduct</b> 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>
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- 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 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

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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 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.

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- 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:
  - 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



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- 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.
- 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.

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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 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

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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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## 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

**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

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- 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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## 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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. 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

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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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 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.

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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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## **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.

### **Accessibility of our offices and officers**

Our offices at 10 Cambridge Road, Sandy SG19 1JE are open from 9.30 am to

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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](http://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 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,

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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 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.

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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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## 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.
- 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

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Town Council for noting.

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## **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 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

# Sandy Town Council

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be committed will be determined by the Town Council with advice from the Responsible Financial Officer both of whom who shall properly assess the risk of committing funds to longer term investments.