

Sandy Town Council

Minutes of a meeting of Sandy Town Council held in the Council Chamber at 10 Cambridge Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire on Monday 22 September 2014 commencing at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs N Aldis, J Ali, C Butterfield, T Cole, M Groom, W Jackson (Town Mayor), C Osborne, M Pettitt, M Runchman, M Scott, K Sharp, R Smith and D Sharman and for part of the meeting Cllr P Sharman

Absent: Cllr S Sutton

In attendance: Seven members of the public, one member of the press, PCSO Ann Jeeves, Central Bedfordshire Councillor Caroline Maudlin and the Town Clerk

Actions

1 Apologies for Absence (74-2014/15)

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Sutton and Cllr Smith had sent apologies for anticipated late arrival or absence depending on his work commitment.

2 Declarations of interest and requests for dispensations (75-2014/15)

- i) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests – None.
- ii) Non Pecuniary Interests – Cllr Jackson declared a personal interest in item 5 because of recent events which could lead to suggestions of bias. Cllr D Sharman declared a personal interest in item 5 because his son has put himself forward for consideration for co-option as a member of the council.
- iii) Dispensations – None.

3 Public Participation Session (76-2014/15)

A member of the public asked a question on item 16 on the agenda (News Release) which stated that members of the public and representatives of the news media might be excluded from that item. The Clerk clarified that the words on the agenda did not refer to the news release. They were preceded by an asterisk and items on the agenda which were likely to be dealt with in confidential session were also marked with an asterisk. This was to alert members of the public and press to the fact that they might be excluded for the consideration of that item of business. A decision about whether or not to actually exclude the public and press would be taken at the point when each specific item came to be discussed.

The same resident asked why there was secrecy surrounding the co-option of a candidate to the office of councillor. The Clerk advised that there was no intention to keep anything secret and asked whether the question referred to the fact that the candidates'

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information forms had not been published on the website. This was confirmed and the Clerk explained that in this as on previous occasions candidates had not been asked to give permission for their candidate information forms to be made public and so they had not been published. The council had not been able to secure permission from both candidates to publish the forms when the question of publication was raised by a member of the public the previous Friday. The Clerk had advised the council that in future all candidate information forms should be clearly marked stating that they would be made public and in future they would be published on the website in the interests of transparency.

Town Clerk

(During this item Cllr Smith joined the meeting.)

4 **Minutes of previous Town Council meeting (77-2014/15)**

RESOLVED to approve the minutes of a meeting of Sandy Town Council held at 7.30 pm on Monday 11 August 2014 as a correct record of proceedings.

Admin

5 **Co-option of New Member (78-2014/15)**

The Town Mayor advised that, as he had declared a personal interest in this item of business and in the light of recent events, he had decided not to participate in this item and to leave the room, the Deputy Mayor also had an interest and would not want to exercise his vote or a casting vote therefore an alternative chairman should be elected for this item of business.

RESOLVED to elect Cllr Groom to chair this item of business.

Cllrs Jackson and D Sharman left the room.

Cllr Groom took the chair and advised that Naomi Rose Clark had withdrawn as a candidate for co-option for reasons to do with her studies leaving two possible candidates for co-option John Alister Gurney and Paul John Sharman. One of the candidates was unable to attend so in the interests of equality it had been decided not to ask the candidate who was present any questions at the meeting as was the council's usual practice. The Chairman reminded members that they had all had the opportunity to review the candidates' statements. There was no obligation to co-opt either candidate if members considered them unsuitable.

It was proposed (and seconded) to co-opt Paul John Sharman as a member of the council and a recorded vote was requested. The Chairman then asked if there were any further nominations but there were none forthcoming. The Chairman noted that an absolute majority of those present and voting was required for the proposal to

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be carried.

RESOLVED to co-opt Paul John Sharman as a member of Sandy Town Council.

Those voting in favour of the resolution: Cllrs N Aldis, J Ali, T Cole, M Groom, C Osborne, M Pettitt, M Runchman, M Scott, K Sharp and R Smith. There were no votes against the resolution. Cllr Butterfield abstained.

Cllrs Jackson and D Sharman returned to the room and Cllr Jackson took over the chair.

Cllr P Sharman made his declaration of acceptance of office before the council and the Proper Officer and joined other members at the council table.

6 **Police Matters (79-2014/15)**

PCSO Jeeves had provided a report on crime in Sandy which had been made available to members shortly before the meeting and she amplified the information therein. Members asked questions in particular about Speedwatch.

RESOLVED to receive the report from PCSO Ann Jeeves on policing in Sandy. The Mayor thanked the officer for attending and she left the meeting.

7 **Burial Regulations (80-2014/15)**

A short report from the Clerk following the public consultation meeting held on 11 September 2014 had been circulated in advance of the meeting and the Mayor asked members to recommend next steps. During extensive discussion it was recognised that some members of the public had strong feelings on this issue and spoke very eloquently at the public meeting. However, the atmosphere had been hostile and emotional and several residents had spoken privately to members stating that they had felt intimidated and unable to express their views in favour of the regulations. Members commented that the regulations, which had been regularly reviewed, had stood the test of time and so a careful and measured approach to any review should be taken. Members stated that there was no intention to avoid or delay decision making but any changes should be made carefully.

RESOLVED to refer the Sandy Cemetery Burial Regulations to a working group consisting of Cllrs Aldis, Ali, Butterfield, Cole, Jackson, Pettitt and Scott for review; the review would include consideration of the extension to the cemetery and whether space could be set aside for memorabilia in the new part of the cemetery. The working group

Cllrs Aldis,
Ali,
Butterfield,
Cole,
Jackson,
Pettitt,
Scott and
Town Clerk

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would report back to PF&R Committee at the latest by 5 January 2015 with a view to final recommendations going to Town Council on 19 January 2015. In the meanwhile no further enforcement action would be taken.

8 Minutes of committees and recommendations therein (81-2014/15)

The minutes of the following committees and sub-committees were considered.

- i) Development Scrutiny Committee meetings on 4 August 2014 and 1 September 2014 **RESOLVED** to note the minutes
- ii) Community Services and Environment Committee meeting on 4 August 2014 **RESOLVED** to note the minutes and to deal with the recommendation to council contained in the minutes to work towards an office base for the outdoor staff at 10 Cambridge Road and to secure garaging space for the vehicles as described in the recent report of the depot working group so that a replacement for the Skoda can be obtained as soon as possible should be agreed in principle subject to detailed costings as part of item 15 on the agenda. **(033-14/15)**
- iii) Policy, Finance and Resources Committee meeting on 1 September 2014 **RESOLVED** to note the minutes.
RESOLVED to approve the recommendation that a new imprest bank account known as the Clerk's imprest account should be opened and used for procurement of supplies in line with the regulations approved by PF&R when this would result in best value or savings for the council. **(24-2014/15)**
RESOLVED to approve the recommendation that the council's funds currently held in the Barclays Base Rate Reward account (£202,248.85) should be transferred to the PSDF. **(24-2014/15)**
RESOLVED to approve the recommendation to adopt a draft FOI policy including internal review/appeal process and to note progress with adoption of revised FOI publication scheme. **(30-2014/15)**
- iv) Human Resources Committee meeting on 15 September 2014 **RESOLVED** to deal with the recommendations contained therein at item 15 on the agenda.

All

Town Clerk

Town Clerk

Admin

Town Clerk

9 Financial Matters (82-2014/15) List of Payments

A resident asked questions about the list of payments made between 1 August 2014 and 31 August 2014. Why had the council made a payment to 1st Choice Staff Recruitment in the sum of £2,233.80 and why was an employment agency been being used at all? The Clerk responded that it was generally the council's policy to recruit direct

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and to avoid employment agencies but an agency worker had been employed to cover a period of short term sick leave which then became long term sick leave. The council did not wish to take on a permanent member of staff until the staff restructure it was engaged in was completed and had continued to use the agency temp. Why had the council made a payment of £1,037.40 to First Capital Connect for rail tickets? The Clerk responded that the Tourist Information Office ran a ticket agency and this was reimbursement to First Capital Connect for tickets sold on their behalf. There would be a corresponding income item within the accounts. Finally the same resident asked why a sum of £3,714.00 had been paid to The Health and Safety People Ltd, what was it for and had competitive quotes been obtained? The Clerk answered that the amount referred to the annual fee for the council's employment advice service and its "competent person" H&S advice service. A one year contract had been entered into with THSP Ltd, quotations from alternative providers had been considered and this was all detailed in previous council reports/minutes.

RESOLVED to note the list of payments made since the last Town Council meeting.

Summary Income and Expenditure Report by Budget Heading to 31 August 2014

Cllr Osborne asked the clerk to check why cost centre 504 Tourist Information Centre appeared to be overspent on the report, suggesting that this was to do with the recoding exercise which was currently being undertaken. The clerk advised that this information would be checked and emailed to members.

RESOLVED to note a summary statement of income and expenditure against budget for the year to date.

10 Amendment to Standing Orders and Scheme of Delegations(83-2014/15)

i) A report on a necessary amendment to Sandy Town Council standing orders regarding the public recording of council meetings been circulated before the meeting and was discussed.

RESOLVED to amend Standing Order no 3 I which stated "*Photographing, recording, broadcasting or transmitting the proceedings of a meeting by any means is not permitted without the Council's prior written consent*" to read "*Oral reporting or oral commenting on a council meeting as it takes place by a person present at the meeting is not permitted but otherwise persons present at meeting may:*

- a *Film, photograph or make an audio recording of a meeting*
- b *Use any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear proceedings at a meeting as it takes place or later*

Town Clerk

Admin

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c Report or comment on the proceedings in writing during or after a meeting or orally report or comment after the meeting"

RESOLVED to obtain quotations for suitable audio recording equipment so that future council meetings could be recorded and a record kept by the council.

ii) The Clerk reported on recent difficulties in convening a quorate Complaints Committee meeting and the subsequent inability of the council to meet the timescales in the council's complaints policy. Wording in the existing scheme of delegations was unclear about how alternative members were to be obtained if elected members were absent or had a conflict of interest.

RESOLVED to amend the scheme of delegations to permit the election of three substitute members of the committee and to advise the Town Clerk to call on all three members at the same time if there was a future issue with a quorum.

RESOLVED to elect Cllrs Aldis, Butterfield and P Sharman as substitute members of the Complaints Committee.

Town Clerk

11 Sandy Market (84 - 2014/15)

Cllr Groom put forward proposals regarding the future of Sandy's weekly and Farmer's markets which had already been considered at Community Services and Environment Committee on 4 August 2014 and Policy, Finance and Resources Committee on 1 September 2014. Members were advised that Central Bedfordshire Council had no objections to the Farmers Market held on their land being changed to a craft and general market although there were some technical issues to overcome. A request for parking for stallholders had not been ruled out but would need further consideration by CBC and a decision would take some time.

There was extensive discussion on the feasibility of reviving the monthly market and the advisability of concentrating on this project at the present time. The Town Clerk expressed concerns about the current workload of the staff and capacity to deal with additional projects in the absence of a Deputy Clerk and with a range of other priorities which the council had previously agreed upon and requested guidance from council about which existing activities should be discontinued in order to permit staff to work on the market. The Town Clerk had been reporting since 2011 that the administrative team was overstretched and the report accompanying item 15 of the agenda again emphasised the increasing workload of the staff. The Town Clerk was asked whether a report could be produced to detail the work involved in dealing with the proposed activities. The Clerk explained that this would also take up staff time. It was suggested that members could take on some of the work involved with the

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market. Members discussed their differing views about this project. During the discussion it was suggested that Cllr Groom might have a pecuniary interest in the market as he was proposing to have a stall himself. The Clerk noted that this was a matter for Cllr Groom to determine but that he had previously registered his interest in having a stall at the Farmers market if the criteria were to be changed but had informed the Clerk that this would be run purely for charity purposes with no direct financial benefit to himself.

RESOLVED to change the criteria of the existing Farmers Market so that it became a craft and general market with effect from 4 October 2014. No second hand goods would be permitted for sale and only one trader of each type would be permitted.

Town Clerk

RESOLVED to offer a rent free period to existing regular traders and to casual traders at this market from 4 October 2014 to 31 March 2015.

Town Clerk

RESOLVED to advise all traders that they must supply their own stalls/gazebos and would be provided with a pitch of 2.7 m² and to set a maximum of 9 pitches.

Town Clerk

RESOLVED to amend the existing Farmers Market banner.

Town Clerk

RESOLVED to make no changes to the weekly Friday market in the expectation that the market will close when the present remaining regular trader retires (likely to be by 31 March 2015).

12 Adoption of land in Sunderland Road (85-2014/15)

Adoption of a strip of STC land along Sunderland Road by the highways authority (Central Bedfordshire Council) was discussed.

RESOLVED to endorse the Clerk's recommendation for a designated strip of land along Sunderland Road to be adopted by the highways authority and to authorise payment of CBC's necessary legal fees (which would be payable whether the matter proceeded to final adoption or not) from the commuted sum received from the Fallowfield estate adoption.

Town Clerk

13 Cemetery Extension (86-2014/15)

This item was withdrawn with council's permission and the Clerk noted that a report would be available at a future meeting.

14 Reports from Representatives (87-2014/15)

To receive written reports from :

- a) CBC Ward members – a report was to follow but Ward members drew attention to the council's budget consultation process. In her capacity as Chairman of the council Cllr Maudlin asked for nominations of community members for her Forget me not Awards.

All

- b) STC Representatives on external bodies – Cllr Scott gave a

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short oral report on the work of the SG19 Road Safety Group which had been active. Members noted that the issue of parking on the corner of Orchard Road remained a problem and the Clerk confirmed that council's concerns about this had been reported to Central Bedfordshire.

15 News Release (88-2014/15)

RESOLVED to ask the clerk to issue news releases about the co-option, the cemetery regulations review and the changes to the Farmers Market.

Town Clerk

15 Staff Restructure and alternations to premises (89-2014/15)

RESOLVED that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press and broadcast media would be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this item of business as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

In the absence of the Chairman of the HR Committee Cllr Osborne led the council through a report from that committee which described the background to a planned restructure, a description of the process followed, details of the existing structure and proposals for a new structure most of which had been approved in principle by council in December 2013. The report also contained financial information about existing staff costs, future staff costs and the financial implications of any potential redundancies if the structure was now implemented. The report contained details of the implementation process, timescale and associated costs. However, it did not deal with any specific costs or details of alterations to the office premises at 10 Cambridge Road because it was intended to proceed with the staff restructure irrespective of whether changes were made to the premises. The report had also been written on the assumption that council would approve the recommendation from CS&E Committee on 4 August that the council would agree in principle that it would "work towards an office base for the outdoor staff at 10 Cambridge Road and to secure garaging space for the vehicles as described so that a replacement for the Skoda can be obtained as soon as possible subject to detailed costings".

The report contained information about the administrative team's current workload and that of the Town Clerk as well as recommendation to secure some locum clerk support over the period of the implementation and to extend the contract of the temporary staff member in the administrative team whilst the implementation took place.

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The report was discussed in detail and members agreed that it was important to progress the matter as quickly as possible.

It was unanimously **RESOLVED** to adopt the report and recommendations from the HR Committee and approve the implementation process described in the report as quickly as possible. (Adoption of the report and approval of the implementation procedure implied approval of the recommendation from CS&E Committee above although this recommendation was not approved by separate resolution.)

Town Clerk

The Town Clerk was instructed to proceed with the staff restructure and report to the HR Committee.