

Sandy Town Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Policy Finance and Resources Committee of Sandy Town Council which was held in the Council Chamber at 10 Cambridge Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire on Monday 23 October 2017 commencing at 7.30pm.

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

In attendance: Mr C Robson (Town Clerk)

Actions

1 Apologies for absence (48-2017/18)

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr D Sharman.

2 Declarations of interest (49-2017/18)

i) Declarable pecuniary interests – None

ii) Non-pecuniary interests – None

Cllr. Aldis declared that he was no longer on the Sandy and District Leisure Gardens and Allotments Society in relation to 11.2.

3 Public Participation Session (50-2017/18)

No members of the public were present and no questions had been received in advance of the meeting.

4 Minutes of previous meeting (51-2017/18)

RESOLVED to receive the minutes of the Policy, Finance and Resources Committee held on 11 September 2017 and to approve them as a correct record of proceedings.

5 Financial Reports (52-2017/18)

i) A balance sheet and detailed financial report showing income and expenditure against the revenue budget for the year to 31 August 2017 had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

A Member queried what the income under 402 1245 related to. The amount was listed as a grant received. The Clerk was unable to clarify the matter at the meeting but later confirmed that the amount was a receipt from the Mayor's charity account and the Sandy Football Club for the cost of the new defibrillator located at Bedford Road recreation ground.

Town Clerk

It was **RESOLVED** to note the accounts.

ii) Members received and reviewed overview report from the Clerk.

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It was **RESOLVED** to receive and note the report.

- iii) Members scrutinised a schedule of payments made since the previous meeting.

Members discussed water rates, which were over spent on one account but credits were in place on other accounts. The Chairman commented that getting all accounts considered as one may be a better way of calculating supply.

RESOLVED to approve the schedule of payments.

- iv) Bank reconciliations and statements.

RESOLVED that Cllr Scott scrutinise the bank reconciliations and statements and sign these as approved at the end of the meeting.

Cllr M Scott

6 External Audit Report (53-2017/18)

Members received the external audit report for the financial year 2016/17. Members noted that the Council had received a clean report with no actions required by the auditor. A Member commented on an error in the return which had been corrected but was difficult to read. The Clerk informed Members that this was due to a correction he had to make prior to submission and that the auditor had not commented on this.

The Chairman commented that the report must go to Full Council for acceptance and will be taken to the meeting on 6 November 2017.

7 Building Insurance (54-2017/18)

The Committee received a valuations assessment on the Council's buildings which was organised by the Council's insurance company. Members discussed the report and commented that the values of the buildings seemed quite high in some cases. A Member noted that the assessed value was for reinstatement and not a sale value. Another valuation would be needed once the new depot and cemetery were completed.

The Clerk informed Members that the insurance company had adjusted the Councils' building insurance to reflect the new valuations. A £20 credit had been received.

A Member noted that report contained some information about the buildings which may put the Council at risk if it is left in the public domain. It was agreed to remove the report from the Council's

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website.

It was **RESOLVED** to receive the report.

8 Action List (55 -2017/18)

Members received the Action List and updates from the Clerk.

The amended plan for the depot had been reviewed and approved by the Cemetery Working Group. This was submitted to the Local Planning Authority and awaits approval before the next stage can continue.

The Clerk informed Members that CBC's contract manager was awaiting some plans to accompany agreements related to the Jenkins, school and associated areas. It was reported by CBC that all parties are happy with the agreements and signing should be imminent.

Members noted that report.

9 Grant Application (56 -2017/18)

The committee received and considered a grant application for £1,850 from Biggles FM.

A Member commented that a review of the report for agenda item 9.II showed that the Council had given a grant to Biggles FM regularly over the last five years.

The Clerk commented that the Council's grant application states that grants will not be provided for running costs of an organisation and should be for something more specific.

It was Proposed and Seconded that a grant of £250 be awarded to Biggles FM and that it is requested that this money is spent on the purchase of equipment as mentioned in the application.

A member commented that they would like to know how many people in Sandy were benefiting from the radio station. The Council should not award a grant every year for the sake of it. It is understandable that the station cannot afford the costs involved to get listener figures, but some form of measuring its benefit for Sandy's residents is needed. A Member agreed with the principle raised but conceded it was difficult to measure its impact and value for money.

A Member commented that as a Council we do not use the station as

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much as we should. Biggleswade Council use it a lot more, hence their grant award of £1,000. It is an important local asset and the Council should support it and use it more.

It was suggested that the Council encourage the station to advertise more and use the Bulletin. The listener base for the station should make itself known. A Member stated he would be interested to know how BTC rationalised a grant of £1,000 and the Clerk was asked to approach the Clerk at Biggleswade.

Town Clerk

Another Member suggested that any grant awarded go towards publicity making the station more visible in sandy.

The Chairman noted that there was a proposition on the table and Member proceeded to vote.

RESOLVED to award a grant of £250 to Biggles FM for the purchase of equipment.

10 Council Community Grants Procedure (57 -2017/18)

Members received and discussed a report from the Clerk and Administration Team on the Councils grant procedure and a review of grants awarded over the last 5 years.

The Chairman reminded Members that information on grants awarded had been requested and the report brought forward a number of options on changes to the grants procedure for consideration. The options were based on a review of how other local councils operate their grant applications. The Chairman also noted that a review of grants over past years showed the Council was not reaching applicants for smaller grants.

A Member summarised that there appeared to be three types of grants which the Council's procedure or budgeting should address;

- One off large application from an organisation. If this was received prior to budget setting an allowance could be made in the following years budget.
- Regular event support which is covered by the Council's 'Events Budget'. Other annual awards should also be treated in a similar manner.
- Smaller applications which occur throughout the year.

The Member concluded that he believed a mixture of 'alternative 4' and a budget for 'guaranteed grants' should be considered and the

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Council should define reoccurring grants.

A Member disagreed and stated that the Council should restrict annual re-occurring applications. The grants budget should be a backup for community groups, not an automatic funding stream. Another Member agreed that the Council should not be setting up a guaranteed grants budget and grants should be awarded on a needs basis.

Members discussed setting two deadline dates a year for applications. This could have the added benefit of allowing the Council to arrange two events at which cheques could be presented. A Member commented that fixed deadlines could make it difficult for organisations who find a pressing need for support outside of the deadline dates. Setting deadlines would remove flexibility for smaller groups to make applications.

It was agreed that the Council's community grants needed better publicity to open it up to a wider group of applicants.

Members noted that the Council do not currently accept applications from individuals. It was proposed and seconded that the wording be amended to state the Council will not 'normally' accept applications from individuals.

RESOLVED that point 7 of the Council's grant criteria be amended to read 'Individuals will not normally be funded'

The Chairman commented that the level of budget in place appeared to be correct, however the uncertainty over when and how many applications would be received was the problem.

It was Proposed and Seconded that the Council's grants procedure should remain as currently carried out.

The Chairman proposed an amendment that grants are awarded at a meeting of the Full Council whenever possible. The amendment was seconded.

RESOLVED that Council's grant procedure follows the same procedure as currently adopted and that grants are awarded at meetings of the Full Council whenever possible.

A Member asked that the annual grant of £25 for the Audrey Booth Award be separated from the grants budget by creating its own code.

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RESOLVED that a separate annual budget of £25 be set up for the Audrey Boothby Award.

11 2018/19 Budget and Precept Request (58-2017/18)

- i) Members received and reviewed a report from the Clerk which detailed some items of capital expenditure the Council may wish to consider for the 2018/19 budget.

Members went through the report and it was agreed that;

The Clerk would bring back a previous report on the cost benefits of replacing LED street lights and how much improvement an investment of £10,000 would make.

Full Council will debate CCTV on 6 November 2017 and whether a new mobile or fixed cameras are needed.

The caged harrow is needed and if funds can be found in the current financial year should be purchased. If not the cost should be included in the 2018/19 financial year.

Agreed to budget for a diesel storage and dispenser and that this would form part of the costs for the new depot build which would be taken via an internal loan.

The Council would not purchase a midi tractor mounted standard sprayer as the cost was greater than anticipated and it would take a considerable time to recoup those costs via savings made in paying a contractor. The chairman commented that the Council could use granulated weed and feed in with its existing machinery.

Members noted the estimated costs of the Play Parks and Beeston allotment site. It was also noted that sc106 funds should cover the costs of the play park refurbishment work.

- ii) Members reviewed the draft budget and precept documents. The clerk commented that the accountant had included an increase in national insurance and pensions which increased the revenue budget slightly. This was because the amount payable by employers to the pension scheme had increased by 1%.

Members noted that the Council was in a healthier position than

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previous years, but this should mean it should not be taken for granted that funds will be available for projects with unknown costs. It was noted that as of next year there would be a rolling capital fund of £120,966 and a surplus in general reserve of £98,784. The Clerk commented that the purchase of the new mower would reduce the capital fund.

Members discussed how best to ensure all Members engaged with the budget. It was agreed that the budget workshop on 13 November was not needed, but that all Members should attend the next Policy, Finance and Resources Committee meeting at which the budget will be reviewed and worked on.

Town Clerk

12 Calendar of Meetings (59-2017/18)

Members received and reviewed a draft calendar of meetings for the next Council year.

A Member queried when the 2019 election would take place as this would have an impact on the Annual Town meeting date. It was confirmed that the election will be held on Thursday 2 May 2019.

It was proposed that the following changes be made to the calendar:

- Move the Human Resources Committee meeting from 4 June 2018 to 11 June 2018.
- Move the Annual Town Meeting to 8 April 2019.
- Move the Town Council Annual meeting from 20 May 2019 to the 13 May 2019.
- Add the Community Services & Environment Committee meeting after Development Scrutiny Committee on the 20 May 2019.

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13 Chairman's Items (60-2017/18)

None.

14 Date of next meeting (61-2017/18)

It was noted that the date of the next committee meeting will be 27 November 2017.