

**Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting for the Parish of Sandy, Bedfordshire, held on Monday 25 April 2016 at Sandy Upper School commencing at 7.30pm.**

**Present:** Cllr W Jackson (Town Mayor as Chairman of the meeting) together with 54 members of the public.

**1. Apologies**

There were no apologies for absence.

**2. Minutes of the 2015 Annual Town Meeting**

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Monday 27 April 2015, which had been circulated to those in attendance prior to the meeting being opened, were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**3. Matters Arising**

The Mayor noted that the No 73 bus route which arose at last year's Annual Town Meeting, would be discussed later on in the meeting.

**4. Town Mayors Awards for services to the community**

The Mayor reported that a high number of nominations had been received making it hard to choose deserving candidates.

The Mayors Youth Award was presented to Charlie Culverhouse and Frankie Byrne. Charlie had organised a Swimathon in memory of his Deputy Head Teacher. He encouraged other school members and friends to join him and together they raised £7,520 for Sue Ryder. Frankie has taken part in a number of events raising money for the British Heart Foundation, St. John's Hospice and the National Autistic Society. Frankie took part in a Swimathon for St John's Hospice, he had only ever swum 25 metres before but managed to complete 25 lengths of the pool and raised over £1,500 in sponsorship.

The Mayors Citizens award was presented to David Woodhouse. David started volunteering for Sandy's Talk of the Town Community transport in 2002. He has carried out a number of roles within the group such as volunteer driver, secretary and chairman, often spending 10 hours a week on the service. Mr Woodhouse thanked everyone who is involved with Talk of the Town as it is very much a team effort.

This year a certificate was also presented to Hayley Stewart as runner up. Hayley has been involved with the Sandy Show for 27 years and the

Sandy Carnival for 12 years. Recently she has also joined the Friends of Sandy Christmas Lights Committee.

The Mayors Community Group award was presented to Sandy Fire and Rescue Service who not only help in times of emergencies but also fit smoke alarms for elderly people, fundraise for various charities and turn up to community events such as the Christmas Lights and the Carnival.

## **5. Reports from Elected Representatives:**

### **i) Town Council – Cllr Will Jackson**

On behalf of Sandy Town Council it is my pleasure to introduce our report to the electorate of Sandy and Beeston after a very busy and challenging year.

Once again we had a very successful day at the end of November when our Christmas lights were switched on. Many organisations had stalls at this event to raise funds and there was a very good selection of stage entertainment from around the area. The weather was rather windy but still approx. 3000 people turned out to support the event once again. What a wealth of talent we have around the town.

Sandy Town Council is committed to the continued support of this very successful event and providing the Christmas lights for the benefit of the local community and we look forward to doing it all again this year. This year's event will be on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2016. The Switch on Event is organised by the 'Friends of Sandy Christmas Lights' group, which relies heavily on volunteers. If you are interested in helping organise this event by joining the groups committee or volunteering on the day, please contact the council offices. We would be very glad to hear from you.

I am pleased to report that we have a settled and hardworking council now and I would like to thank all councillors for the time they voluntarily give to our town.

For the third year Sandy Town Council received no mitigation funding from Central Beds Council which would have been in the region of £50,000 this year, but despite this we have managed to keep our precept rise to only 5.99% which has meant on a band D property an increase of £7.41 per year or 14p per week.

In agreeing the Budget for 2016/17 the Council reviewed and reduced budgets across the board wherever possible and we continue to look to lower costs across all cost centres.

The Town Council does not rely solely on its precept to fund projects and activities and actively pursues grant and support funding wherever possible. The Council is currently working on grant funding to refurbish the War Memorial and make it more accessible, support the cemetery archaeological costs, bring benefits to the High Street from CBC's match fund and over the next year we will actively be looking to bring as much section 106 money back into Sandy as possible, via Council applications and supporting community groups.

Our cemetery extension has received planning permission and we now await the start of the archaeological dig which is a planning requirement. Over the past year several paths have been completely re-laid and resurfaced in our existing cemetery, improving its look and accessibility. Work has also been carried out on the cemetery chapel to protect it from damage caused by nesting birds.

The new reception and information point in the Council offices are now complete and offer information and support on Council services and local information.

Our biggest disappointment has been the proposed allotment site, which has fallen through due to the potential short life span of the site. It was felt that it was a large investment to develop the site and condition the land so it was fit for purpose for potentially such a short time. The Council realises the benefits allotments offer to communities and the Council are committed to finding suitable land. We are continuing to work with CBC officers and the Sandy Allotment Association to explore all other possibilities.

In September we appointed a new Town Clerk who has been working with Council staff and Councillors to progress projects, get involved with the Sandy Community and continue to develop the Council and its services.

The Town Clerk and Grounds team have continued to work with Seetec in supporting and coordinating the work they do around Sandy. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for the work they do which has such a positive impact on our community.

The Mayors charity fund this year has been donated to Sandy Guides for new flags and equipment, Music for Memory (Bedford) to further their work with people who have dementia and the Eve Appeal for gynaecological cancer research. Over £1,700 was raised and may I personally thank all those who attended the mayor's charity events or made donations. It is truly appreciated.

May I thank all the organisations for the warm welcome my wife and I have received when we have visited them and thank them for all their kind invitations and hospitality. We have enjoyed meeting so many people on our visits.

## **ii) Central Bedfordshire (CBC)**

Cllrs Maudlin, Stock and Smith had provided a written report which was made available to those attending the meeting and which presented an overview of Central Bedfordshire Council's work during the year 2015/16. Cllr Maudlin pointed out that all three CBC councillors were happy to be contacted regarding anything mentioned in their reports or any other concerns.

An update was given on the 73 Bus. The 73 bus is in high demand. There is currently a consultation going on regarding parking restrictions required for the Engayne Avenue turning circle. Consultation plans and documents should be at the library, CBC Cllrs will check.

The Department for Transport are looking at the A1. It was last looked at 20 years ago, since then the traffic has increased dramatically and the A1 in its current form is no longer fit for purpose. In the short term there are proposals to reduce the speed limit between Sandy to Biggleswade to 50mph enforced by average speed cameras. CBC will encourage joined up thinking and ask that the area be tidied up and re-white the lines at the same time.

CBC are working with Sandy Town Council to search for allotment land. CBC Cllr Smith said STC had made the right decision regarding the land previously investigated for allotments. It would have been very costly for such a short lease. There are large issues that affect Sandy i.e the A1 and East West Rail link. A degree of growth will be expected but it's important to find the right local plan for this area. CBC can find and allocate sites for allotments when putting the plan in place.

## **6. Reports from other bodies**

The Clerk for Sandy Town Council – Chris Robson, reported that in previous years Bedfordshire Police have produced a report for the Annual Town Meeting and sent a representative to speak. Bedfordshire Police are now no longer able to commit to providing monthly or annual Parish Council reports. Recent restructuring of PCSO numbers resulted in lack of capacity to provide this service.

The restructure is part of a new Community Policing Model known as Operation Salcoats. The new policing model moves towards having more Police Constables, with full warranted powers, and less PCSOs. The reduction in PCSOs means police can no longer routinely attend Council meetings. This will be kept under review.

The focus will be on the use of technology to keep Councils and the public up to speed with information. Policing updates will appear at [www.police.uk](http://www.police.uk), via Beds Alert system, Facebook, Twitter and the website to allow for 'Self-briefing'. All forces must send the latest crime figures to the Home Office between 7 and 16 of the month. These are published on [www.police.uk](http://www.police.uk) by the end of the month. Parish and Town Councils will be provided with a PCSO or PC contact who will act as first point of contact. This is due to be circulated shortly.

Sandy Town Council have invited Wayne Humberstone, Head of Force Control room, to meet with the Council at a Council meeting.

A resident asked how much the Police Crime Commissioner election would cost. CBC Cllr Maudlin said she would look into it and get back to the resident.

## **7. Resolutions and Questions**

No resolutions had been received before the meeting.  
The Mayor opened up the meeting for questions

**i)** A resident asked who is paying for the Police Commissioner elections. Cllr Aldis responded that he thought that each candidate had to pay £5000 costs but the rest came out of the police aspect of the Council Tax bill. CBC Cllr Maudlin responded that she would look into the matter and report back to the resident.

**ii)** A question had been received in advance of the meeting: the waiting time to see a doctor can be as much as several weeks. What is the Town Council doing to improve health care facilities in the town?

Members are aware of the seriousness of pressure currently placed on various aspects of Sandy's infrastructure, including Health Care. It is recognised that any additional development in Sandy would greatly increase pressure and that a radical review of infrastructure would be required. The Council has written to Central Bedfordshire Council as part of the 'Call for Sites' process highlighting concerns and emphasising that any future development must address Health Care provision. The Council is working with Kings Road surgery to support them in a proposed move to Shannon Court.

CBC Cllr Smith reported that this issue was not a simple one. Even if CBC release land for the NHS they might not take them up on the offer. This is because the NHS cannot guarantee providing the Doctors for the surgery due to the shortage of Doctors. The local MP – Alistair Burt, CBC and Sandy Town Council are aware of the issue.

A member of the public mentioned that the Healthcare Organisation would be holding an exhibition in Sandy Library. Any issues linked to healthcare could be brought up there.

**iii)** A question had been received in advance of the meeting: I understand that the Seetec Scheme may be coming to an end. Has the Mayor any information about this as the workers on the project have done so very much to improve the environment and appearance of Sandy?

Seetec runs a community work placement scheme in Sandy as part of the government's Help to Work scheme designed to help individuals into employment. Their remit is to carry out work in Sandy which is of a community benefit. The Town Clerk and Council's outdoor team, along with other groups and individuals in Sandy, work with Seetec to identify work. The Council supports Seetec in carrying out tasks in anyway it can, from supplies to joint working. The Council is aware that the scheme may be coming to an end but have not been given further details at present.

A member of the public said he had been informed that the project was closing. He thinks Seetec should approach CBC to fund the continuation of the project. But he would also like to see them do gardening for the sick and disabled.

**iv)** A question had been received in advance of the meeting: One can wait ages for a bus and then several turn up at the same time causing congestion in the town centre. What is the Town Council doing to improve the situation?

The Town Council recently discussed the various commercial and community bus services which serve Sandy and voiced a desire to see round the table discussions between all service providers to harmonise timetabling and advertising. The Town Clerk has contacted one service provider and is looking into contacting others to encourage a joined up approach.

CBC Cllr Maudlin reported that the bus that picks up in Engayne Avenue was supposed to link with the no. 73 bus which is why it looks like they are following each other.

A member of the public stated that the buses were seldom on time and that the timetables for the local volunteer run services were cable-tied to lamp posts.

A member of the public stated that when the new bus shelters were put in they were supposed to be putting in real time display boards which haven't materialised. Cllr Maudlin responded that due to a number of buses coming from different areas this wasn't possible with the real time display boards on offer at the time. So it is a question of waiting for the right system.

**v)** A question had been received in advance of the meeting: When the route of the East West Rail line is published the demand for even more houses in Sandy will increase greatly. What is the Town Council doing to ensure that this growth is managed in a sensible way and that the maximum benefits are obtained for the town?

Sandy Town Council recognise that the East West rail route could have a massive impact on development and the town's ambitions and identity. The Town Council is engaging with CBC and the East West Rail consortium. An announcement with detail about the corridor is expected in May. The Council has written to CBC as part of their recent 'Call for sites' to voice its concerns and begin the process of engaging with officers on the Local Plan. CBC recognises that Sandy is in a unique position due to the constraints placed on growth and development. CBC need to work with Sandy in a different way to some other areas. Development in Sandy should be thought of in terms of at least twenty years ahead, with coherent and joined up planning which avoids piecemeal development. This must take into account the East West Rail and the A1. At a meeting of the Full Council it was agreed to set up a Community Plan Steering group. The group will begin the process of creating a Community Plan, including policies on land allocation (residential, commercial etc) and addressing infrastructure needs and ambitions for Sandy. Including harnessing potential opportunities.

**vi)** A question had been received in advance of the meeting: What is the latest situation on the mosaic project? Will these be a financial burden on the tax payers of Sandy?

The Mosaics Trail project proposes to have a series of historical mosaics in Sandy, Potton and Biggleswade to help promote the route between the towns and tourism within the area. A community workshop would be run for the duration of the project. An application was put in to CBC's Market Town Regeneration Fund for funding. The Mosaic Trail is to be recommended to Central Bedfordshire Council's Executive Committee for

approval in early June. A final decision on the project will be made by the Executive.

Prior to this the Town Clerk will be working with CBC officers to clarify some areas of the application that need further information.

**vii) When will the Council progress the extension to the Cemetery?**

Planning permission for the cemetery extension has been granted. The permission requires that an archaeological excavation of the whole site take place. The Council worked with Central Bedfordshire Council's archaeological team to establish the work that needed to be done and draw up a brief and tender documents. The Council went out to tender for Archaeological contractors and the Cemetery Working Group took expert advice in reviewing tenders. A recommendation for a preferred tender is to go before Council and the Clerk will begin discussions with the appointed Archaeologist in agreeing a timescale for the excavation.

A member of the public thanked the Council for repairing the paths in the cemetery and to the ground staff for maintaining the cemetery.

There being no other questions the Mayor closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.