**Minutes of a Meeting of the Development Scrutiny Committee of**

**Sandy Town Council held in the Council Chamber at 10 Cambridge**

**Road on Monday 28 January 2013 commencing at 7.30 pm**

**Present:** Cllrs S Lunn (Vice-chairman), C Osborne, M Runchman (substitute for Cllr Pettitt), D Sharman and R Smith

**Absent:** Cllrs Ali, Lynch, Maycock, Pettitt, Sutton and White

**In attendance:** Cllr P N Aldis and the Town Clerk.

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| **1** | **Apologies**Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Lynch, Maycock, Pettit, Sutton and White. |
| **2** | **Declarations of interest** 1. **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests** - None
2. **Personal Interests –** Cllr Osborne drew attention to his membership of the RSPB and the fact that his daughter was an employee (application no CB/12/04123/FULL), Cllr Runchman drew attention to the fact that she lived in Cedar Gardens (application no CB/TPO/13/ 00010)
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| **3** | **Planning Applications** The following planning applications submitted for comment by Central Bedfordshire Council were reviewed.**3.1 CB/13/00017/ FULL** Erection of rear conservatory (retrospective) at **1 Kingfisher Close, Sandy, Beds.****It was resolved** to make no objections to the rear conservatory as it was in keeping with the existing developments and had been built for some years.**3.2 CB/13/00077/ FULL** Change of use of former village hall to a residential dwelling, plus minor elevational alterations to facilitate the change of use at **Village Hall, The Green, Beeston, Beds.****It was resolved** to make no objectionsto theproposed development whilst noting that this did not imply that the Town Council’s had given formal consent to vehicular access across the village green to the proposed dwelling.**3.3 CB/TPO/13/ 00010** Works to a tree protected by a Tree Preservation Order: One Cedar tree in the front garden prune branches overhanging the property next door (No 6) The tree is located within Order MB/TPO/04/00013 and is listed as T2. At **5 Cedar Gardens, Sandy, Beds.****It was resolved** to make no objections to the proposed works and to note that they would represent an improvement for near neighbours.**3.4 CB/13/00061/FULL** Demolition of existing car port. Widening of existing garage, new pitched roof over widened garage, complete with an additional bedroom in garage roof space/first floor level. New dormer windows to front and rear of roof space/first floor room at **25 Orchard Road, Beeston, Beds****It was resolved** to make no objections to the proposed development which was regarded as an improvement to the street scene.**3.5 CB/12/04123/FULL** Extend and improve existing track on reserve lands at **The Lodge, Potton Road, Sandy, Beds.****It was resolved** to make no objections to the proposed development which would enhance the facilities at the RSPB reserve for the benefit of many visitors. |
| 4 | **Minutes of previous meeting** The minutes of meeting of the Development Scrutiny Committee held on Monday 10th December 2012 had been circulated before the meeting.**It was resolved** to approve them as a correct record of proceedings. |
| **5** | **Committee Arrangements and Scheme of Delegations**In the absence of the Committee Chairman the Clerk read feedback from him to the members as follows:* In practice this committee is not working terribly well as its business consists almost exclusively of commenting on planning applications and staff frequently have to ask CBC for an extension of time to comment. (However the Clerk noted this was also the case with the previous committee arrangements and was a consequence of the 3 week planning cycle.)
* Without the screen and projector and Wi-Fi it is impossible for all members to look at the same plan at the same time.
* Most members do not view the plans prior to the meeting.
* Site visits are not organised collectively.
* If the business of the evening is to comment on a single application that hardly justifies setting aside a whole evening by members and staff.
* I think DS should meet on the same evening as other committees and TC. It should rarely be the only meeting of the evening.
* I think the clerking burden should be shared between the 3 members of staff qualified to clerk.

Feedback from the staff team had been provided in writing in advance of the meeting.**It was resolved** to comment on the questionnaire as follows**:**

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| 1 | **Committee Size**The committee agreed that under the present arrangements 10 was a good size for the committee. (Although Cllr Aldis expressed the view that the committee size could be reduced to 6 with 6 members on the HR sub-committee and 9 members on the other two committees making 2 committee places for each councillor.) |
| 2 | **Terms of Reference/Delegated Decision making**The committee agreed that the TOR and delegated decision making arrangements were clear and working well. |
| 4 | **Frequency and timing of Meetings**It was agreed that meetings should be frequent in order to meet the requirements of the planning cycle but efforts should be made to shorten the meetings by better preparation and meeting discipline. The committee agreed that meeting should be held on the same evening as other meetings and proposed that they should begin at 7 pm with the intention of the following meeting commencing at 7.45 pm. This time was selected as the best compromise for working councillors and members of the public to attend the meeting. The Clerk drew attention to recent examples of suspension of Standing Orders so as to allow for meetings which were longer than 2.5 hours and pointed out that the NALC guideline for meetings without a break was 2 hours. It was unreasonable to expect officers and members to perform well if meetings were back to back and lengthy and the alternative of adjourning business to a later meeting could be used more often. |
| 5 | **Management of Meetings**It was agreed that site visits were desirable and the committee suggested that when giving notice of new applications the office staff could remind members that if a collective site visit was considered necessary they should liaise with the Chairman of the committee to arrange this. The use of Wi-Fi and a permanent screen and different methods of displaying the plans were discussed. It was agreed that the introduction of Wi-Fi into the chamber would be beneficial for several reasons. The committee felt that it was important for all three qualified staff to provide clerking services although there was recognition that not all staff were confident about clerking meetings. It was agreed that the Development Scrutiny meeting was a good way for inexperienced staff to develop their skills and that members would be supportive of less experienced staff when employed in this role.  |
| 7 | **Any other issues**The committee discussed the use of modular furniture and public participation in the meeting and noted that research on options was currently being undertaken. |

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| **6** | **Items for Information**The committee was advised that:1. Planning Application CB/12/03693 demolition of existing barns and erection of detached dwelling at land to the rear of 94 London Road Sandy had been granted and the Town Council’s concerns about access to the development were addressed in the conditions.
2. Planning Application CB/12/02367/FULL retention of two chalet bungalows with home office on land adjacent to Cobblers Cottage had been refused because the application contained insufficient information in the form of a legal agreement requiring contributions to local infrastructure.
3. Cllr Aldis had requested a site visit for Planning Application CB/12/04342/FULL development on land to the rear of 152-156 St Neots Road and the case officer’s recommendation was for approval.
4. CBC planning enforcement officers had visited the shop premises occupied by Keech Hospice Care in the town centre on 17 January 2013 and advised them that advertisement consent was required albeit retrospectively for the illuminated fascia and hanging sign installed without permission.
5. CBC was undertaking a consultation on the Community Infrastructure Levy which closed on 25 February and this would be brought to committee.
6. CBC had held a public consultation on proposed changes to the Sandy Conservation Area Plan which had not been well publicised locally. The relevant officers had been asked to attend a Town Council meeting to discuss the proposed plan.
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