

SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Sandbach Town Council held at 7pm on Thursday 23 January 2003 in the Council Chamber, Westfields.

PRESENT

Councillors: Mrs D E Alcock, Chairman
M J Wood, Vice-Chairman
Councillors: Mrs R D Frost
Mrs P M Minshull
Mrs E J Rubidge
B Brindley
J M Goode
D Lloyd Griffiths
J J Moore
N T Price
D Robinson
A J Walker

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors: Mrs D Flint
E A Lea
J Iddon

2. A POLICEMAN FOR SANDBACH

The following motion was passed with two votes against.

RESOLVED: That in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public and press be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw.

Following queries as to the need for the above resolution the Chairman decided not to enforce it.

The Chairman introduced Inspector Alan Holt of the Cheshire Constabulary Crime and Disorder Unit who said a few words about the proposal. He then went on to answer questions from members.

A scheme has been introduced in Halton but Inspector Holt was not privy to the details. If Sandbach were to go ahead it would be the first scheme in this part of the County.

The Council Tax payer already pays for the Police and the Community Wardens. This would be a third payment for policing. There was a fear that conventional policing would be reduced accordingly and that this third payment would end as a subsidy to the first without any benefit to the Council Tax payer. Inspector Holt said it was the Police intention to increase the size of the Community Action Team as resources allowed. The dedicated PC, who could be male or female, would not be a response officer and as such would not be directly deployed by the Constabulary. The officer would be fully equipped but

the provision of transport was not included in the initial costings, which would be at the discretion of the Council.

A mountain bike was suggested but Inspector Holt thought that the high profile role he envisaged meant the officer should be seen on foot. The officer would be equipped with personal radio and mobile telephone and would get the same assistance as the Community Action Team. The CAT works closely with the Community Safety Wardens within the framework of the Congleton Community Safety Strategy. The Wardens powers are currently very restricted and situations involving potential confrontation were to be avoided. In all circumstances, prompt support is essential and the same level of support was envisaged for the proposed police officer.

Response to 999 calls would be through existing policing arrangements and would not involve the new officer. If the officer found it necessary to arrest someone, Inspector Holt suggested that this may be best achieved by the new officer making a statement and with the remainder of the arrest procedure being carried out by the existing patrols. Consequently, the new officer could quickly return to visible patrolling. (This procedure would need to be clarified within the contractual arrangements).

Similarly, the new role would have to be clearly defined and would be the subject of agreement between the Constabulary and the Town Council. Hours would be dictated by the type of policing required at any given time. Certain agreed problems would be targeted and as results were achieved new targets would be set. It might be that the commercial sector would wish to make a financial contribution and have a say in what were the priorities. The Council would have the discretion to involve other bodies such as outlying parishes.

Inspector Holt suggested that absence due sickness, leave and training commitments would be covered by existing police resources, subject to the terms of the negotiated contract. The cover would possibly come from the Community Action Team who would be familiar with the new officers working arrangements.

The method of assessing performance would have to be agreed and would change depending on the problems being tackled. The method should be numerical and clearly defined.

The use of special constables was discussed. For various reasons they could not achieve what was sought.

The officer would be contacted by radio and mobile telephone. The officer would undergo annual training to maintain the level of skills. The officer would have access to Sandbach Police Station, although CBC may wish to consider the possibility of providing alternative accommodation within Westfields. Selection would be by a panel on which the Town Council would be

represented. The criteria would be debated beforehand. Inspector Holt thought that the position would be attractive and that there would be no shortage of applicants. There were questions about how the Council would manage the officer. Inspector Holt said that that was for the Council to decide.

RESOLVED: that Inspector Holt was thanked most sincerely for his contribution and that the matter is debated in full at the next Town Council meeting on 13 February 2003.

The meeting closed at 8pm.

D E Alcock
Chairman

Ref: TCMS0103