

SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Sandbach Town Council held on 7 July 2005 in the Council Chamber, Westfields.

PRESENT

Councillors: J J Moore, Chairman
Mrs D E Alcock
Mrs P M Minsull
Mrs P E M Price
Mrs M E Smith
Mrs G M Thomas
P J Darnes
J Iddon
D Lloyd-Griffiths
B E Moran, Vice-Chairman
E A Lea
N T Price
D Robinson
M R Sherman

Also present County Councillor Roy Giltrap

The Opening Prayer was read by the Reverend Adrian Lloyd.

The Chairman called for a minute's silence in respect for those killed and hurt in the London outrage earlier in the day.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors: L Morris
D K Atkin
W W Scragg
R W Sutton

The Clerk was requested to send a get-well-soon card to Cllr Morris who had been involved in a road accident.

2. THE CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

He had attended a large number of events, too many to list. He was pleased to say that the sun shone on each and every one.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting to allow questions from members of the public. Miss Joyce Griffiths said that when the Council make their comments about the Transportation Project they should emphasise the unsatisfactory state of the dropped kerbs for those in wheelchairs.

There being no more questions the Chairman reconvened the Town Council Meeting.

3. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS HELD ON TUESDAY 17 MAY 2005.

RESOLVED: that the minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman.

4. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAYS 19 MAY, 9 JUNE AND 30 JUNE 2005.

RESOLVED: that the minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman.

5. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 23 JUNE 2005.

RESOLVED: that the minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman.

6. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE QUALITY COMMITTEE HELD ON 16 JUNE 2005.

RESOLVED: that the minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman.

7. MATTERS ARISING FROM COMMITTEE MEETINGS

7.1 Finance Committee - Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2005

RESOLVED: that the accounts be confirmed.

7.2 Finance Committee – Audit Statement of Assurance

RESOLVED: that the Audit Statement of Assurance be confirmed.

7.3 Quality Committee – Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Bill

RESOLVED: that the committee's recommendation to welcome the new powers in principle be confirmed.

8. REPORTS FROM COUNCIL DELEGATES / SUB-COMMITTEES

8.1 Sandbach Partnership

Cllr Moran presented a report from Mr David McGifford.

RESOLVED: that the report be received.

8.2 Sandbach Literary Institution

Cllr Lloyd-Griffiths reported that the refurbishment work was nearly complete and it was believed that it had been carried out on time and on budget.

RESOLVED: that the report be received.

9. SANDBACH TRANSPORTATION PROJECT AFTER-STUDY

Cllr Robinson declared an interest on part of the project on High Street.

The Town Council had been invited to comment on the project by the Cheshire County Council Traffic and Transportation Division as part of the after-study.

The project has not been completed despite the pre-supposition implied in the term after-study. Parking still continues on the Market Square, for example, despite the four years since the agreement to remove cars. Most people believe that the one-way system should be reversed but this may introduce unforeseen problems. The traffic engineers should be asked to prepare a report on the advantages and disadvantages of each mode.

The original study required control of parking and recommended charging. When traffic calming was introduced on Crewe Road the idea of speed cushions proved extremely unpopular and they were not installed. Speed cushions have been installed on Congleton Road despite not being included in the study. The traffic calming on the High Street was proving to be a trip hazard and should be removed. The footpath is deteriorating badly and also presents a trip hazard.

The purpose of the original study was to provide traffic management and some of the aims had been achieved. The study is ongoing and will have no end date.

The introduction of the one-way system was a compromise. The committee had wanted the High Street to be made pedestrian only from Hightown to the Square. The engineers had insisted that there must be a turning point for large vehicles in the area of the Square which was not practicable. The direction of the one-way was chosen to avoid the severance of Sandbach Heath from the town centre. There was no need for a turning circle contrary to the engineers' advice. Members had seen examples, particularly on the continent, where delivery vehicles were allowed to continue through pedestrian zones at less than walking pace.

The new raised footpath on Congleton Road gave the impression that the road was suitable for higher speeds than is safe.

Management of parking was an essential part of the project and pay and display works well elsewhere. The delay in the so-called decriminalisation of parking has not helped. Coupled with the need for improved parking was the need for an improvement in bus services. Both had not happened but both were needed if the project was to be successful.

One member thought that it was unlikely that the Council could reach a consensus on what was needed and recommended that each councillor replied to the after-study individually. He had difficulty in establishing which documents defined the project.

There was still confusion and misunderstanding amongst users about the cycle lane in the middle of the road. Delivery vehicles to Iceland are now parking in the High Street instead of on their own land. Arrangements should have been made for them to gain access from Brook House Drive.

The right turn from the Commons bus stop is dangerous because of parked vehicles. The situation is exacerbated by the oncoming drivers negotiating the cushions. The two-way traffic outside the library should be made one-way.

The disabled parking facility has been implemented such that users find it difficult to park legally and prefer angled parking. A suggestion to move the taxi rank to this point was rejected because of fears of bad behaviour on the High Street by taxi customers. However, the taxi rank would be an ideal position for PSV loading, off-loading and parking. Limiting the small Common to disabled parking was considered but did not find general favour. The need for specified disabled parking was questioned when registered vehicles are allowed to park for up to three hours in restricted areas provided that they do not cause an obstruction. It was apparent that the subjects of the management of parking (pay & display and decriminalisation), local bus services and facilities for taxis and PSVs must be reconsidered.

The implementation of this scheme has been unprofessional. For example, there was little forward planning by getting Central Government approval for highway changes to ensure completion of the project within an acceptable timescale. The order for the removal of disabled parking on the market square should have been obtained in 2002/3 and not in 2005. The same comment applies to the proposed parking restrictions in Congleton road adjacent to Scotch Common.

RESOLVED: that the traffic engineers are asked to reassess the traffic calming on High Street and Congleton Road.

RESOLVED: that the traffic engineers are asked to reassess the possibility of making High Street pedestrian only from Hightown to the Square by allowing delivery vehicles to continue through the pedestrian zone at a speed not exceeding three miles per hour.

The following resolution was passed by the Chairman's casting vote.

RESOLVED: that there should be no special provision for disabled parking.

The following resolution was passed with three abstentions and none against.

RESOLVED: that it is the opinion of Sandbach Town Council that Sandbach Council Tax payers and residents are not well served by the current Highways Department at Cheshire County Council in the execution of their responsibilities, technically, financially or in respect of their public relations.

10. REFURBISHMENT OF THE COBBLES

It was reported that no further correspondence has been received.

RESOLVED: that a letter of disappointment is sent to the County Engineer. The lack of progress on the Cheshire Railings replacement should be included in the letter.

11. CORRESPONDENCE

11.1 Harris Group – Civic Feature between Ashfields and Aldi

RESOLVED: that the letter of explanation from CBC Planning be received.

11.2 Joint Highways – Mr James Wood

RESOLVED: that his proposed attendance at the September Council meeting is welcomed.

11.3 Minister of State for Pensions – Age Partnership Group

RESOLVED: that the information on age discrimination be received.

11.4 CCC – Website Hosting Scheme

RESOLVED: that Cllr Darnes represents the Council at a meeting on 14 July.

11.5 CBC – Newall Avenue Council Depot

A reply had been received to the Council's request for information.

RESOLVED: that a letter is sent to the portfolio holder asking why there was no budget for the depot and urging that the future of the site is resolved on an urgent basis.

11.6 CCC – Rural Arts Support

The Arts Development Officer had offered to speak to the Council about help available.

RESOLVED: that this offer be passed to the Quality Committee.

11.7 CCC – County Forums

RESOLVED: that the dates be received.

11.8 CBC – Local Heroes Award

RESOLVED: that the Council nominate Mr Andrew Maddock, secretary of the Sandbach Rugby Club in view of the excellent work he had done in involving the Club with the community.

11.9 Cheshire Constabulary – Civic Parades

They wish to discourage parades on the highway.

RESOLVED: that a letter is sent to the Chief Constable, the Chair of the Police Committee and Lady Winterton to express the view that the traditional parade represents the heart and soul of a local community and for the police to withdraw their traditional assistance gives the wrong message.

11.10 Cheshire Constabulary - Consultation

They replied to the Council's criticism that insufficient time was allowed for a considered response.

RESOLVED: that the letter be received and that the Council looks forward to improved consultation in the future.

11.11 CBC – Chief Executive Apology

He apologised for the state of the Council Chamber for the Annual Council Meeting.

RESOLVED: that the letter be received.

11.12 CBC – Borough Elections

The Council's views were sought.

RESOLVED: that a reply is sent stating that the Council has no objection to the proposals but it does have concern about combining Town elections with County and Borough.

11.13 CBC – Streetscape on Litter Collection

Streetscape had responded to the Council's suggestion that they might be embarrassed by the amount of litter collected by Sandbach Clean Team.

RESOLVED: that a reply is sent stating that voluntary groups should not be used to maintain adequate standards but instead should be used to achieve a much higher than adequate standard.

12. DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED: that the next meeting of the Sandbach Town Council be held on Thursday 22 September 2005 at 7.15 pm in the Sandbach Literary Institution.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm.

J J Moore
Chairman

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