

# SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Meeting of Sandbach Town Council held on 12 April 2018 at 7.00pm at Sandbach Literary Institution.**

**PRESENT**

Councillors: M Forster (Mayor)  
R Hovey (Deputy Mayor)  
R Hoffmann  
J Cartlidge  
P Eaton  
G Merry  
G Price Jones  
A Smith  
K Flavell  
S Ashcombe-Hurt  
C Lowe  
M Benson  
B Moran  
M Muldoon  
K Southwell  
S Kirkham

Also present were Reverend Shepherd, Youth Representative Mollie Burns and eleven members of the public and press.

---

The opening prayer was read by Reverend Thomas Shepherd.

## **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillors: R Wait.  
K Haines  
S Corcoran  
M Lea-O'Mahoney

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

### Councillor C Lowe

Declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 24.4, stating that she has worked with Trevor Boxer and Dick Macaulay on the writing of the document 'Extending Footpath Accessibility – Sandbach'.

## **3. MAYORS REMARKS**

This will be the Mayor's final meeting and he thanked members of the community for their support and commitment during his term in office.

He spoke about his attendance at various community events and that he has always been made to feel most welcome. He said that volunteers and the community always appear 'chuffed' to see the Mayor support their activities; for him this has been a humbling experience. To recognise the work of the many community groups of Sandbach, the Mayor will hold an afternoon tea on 13 May, at which time he will present certificates to recognise community involvement. Over forty voluntary organisations have been invited, with fifteen positive responses being received to date. All Councillors are invited. It is hoped that this will become an annual event.

At the Police Cluster meeting last Friday, a members' priority sheet was circulated, this has since been forwarded by email to all Councillors. Members are asked to return completed sheets to the Clerk, who will pass onto the PCSO for action.

Thanks to the Youth Representative Mollie Burns for her regular attendance and contributions, with very best wishes for her forthcoming exams and the future.

---

## **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

The Town Mayor adjourned the meeting to allow questions from members of the public.

### Chairman of Sandbach Footpath Group

A document entitled 'Footpath Accessibility' has been circulated with the agenda, the purpose of the document is to extend some of the Town's footpaths and make them accessible to the whole community. Each of seven proposals were outlined. To be able to achieve the plan, a financial commitment is required. It is felt that such a commitment should be via S106 funding, linked to the many developments taking place within Sandbach and the Council's Planning Committee is asked to support the proposals when viewing and responding to planning applications.

Cllr Lowe and the Chairman of SWWG were thanked for their contributions to the document.

### Ms McDade

Spoke in respect of item 24.1 and asked members to be fully aware of reasons used to take this matter to confidential discussion.

Alsager Cllr S Halliwell

Concern was expressed regarding the announcement that Barclays are to close their Alsager and Sandbach branches; this decision leaves Alsager without a bank. Alsager Town Council is presently liaising with Barclays Bank, with a view to keeping one of the local branches open on either a part-time or full-time basis, and request Sandbach Town Council's support.

Following the questions the Town Mayor reconvened the Town Council Meeting.

---

**4. ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**RESOLVED:** that, under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, item numbers 7, 13.1.1 and 27 will be considered with the exclusion of public and press.

**5. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 8 MARCH 2018.**

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting of the Town Council held on 8 March 2018 are approved as an accurate record.

**6. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE PLANNING & CONSULTATION COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD ON 19 FEBRUARY AND 12 MARCH 2018 (DRAFT).**

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes be noted.

**7. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE HELD ON 21 MARCH 2018 (DRAFT). [Closed Session]**

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes be noted.

**8. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE FINANCE, POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 8 MARCH 2018 (DRAFT).**

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes be noted.

**9. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF THE COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 1 MARCH (DRAFT).**

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes be noted.

**10. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF THE EVENTS SUB-COMMITTEE HELD ON 6 MARCH 2018 (DRAFT).**

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes be noted.

**11. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF THE ASSETS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE - THERE ARE NONE.**

**12. UNDISCHARGED RESOLUTIONS**

Lead: Town Mayor

A schedule of undischarged resolutions was presented. The Clerk drew attention to an item which has been on the schedule since June 2017 and stated that despite a reminder being sent to HM Prison and Probation Service, no response or acknowledgement has been received. She asked members if they wished the item to remain on the schedule?

**RESOLVED:** that the matter related to Linden Bank is pursued at the next meeting of the Linden Bank Liaison Committee and that the schedule be noted.

**13. MATTERS ARISING**

**13.1 Personnel Committee - Councillor-Officer Communication**

Closed session.

**14. MARKET PROJECT**

Lead: Lead Member, Cllr Forster

Cllr Forster distributed a Report of the meeting with David Trowler and representatives of the contractor held on 12 April pm 2018.

**15. OFFICE PROJECT**

Lead: Lead Member, Cllr Hovey

The suitability of the current office accommodation has been raised through staff questionnaires and PDPs.

The Clerk continues to request monthly updates from the SLI Trust and it is understood that progress is being made, with the appointment of the Lottery Heritage Fund bid-writer.

There has been an attempt to contact the agent of a vacant premises within town to arrange a viewing; if suitable, this would provide a back-up option if required, should the SLI not progress as an option.

The upgrade of the Town Hall office was discussed, and it was agreed that this would be a worthwhile exercise, fully manageable and fundable during the current financial year.

**RESOLVED:** that the progress report be received and that the Town Hall Office Accommodation be considered at the next meeting of the Office Project Working Group, which will take place as soon as possible.

**16. COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL**

The Communication Protocol was presented to STC almost a year ago, at which time concerns were expressed that it may constitute a conflict against the adopted Code of Conduct.

Enquiries have been made with the CEC Monitoring Officer and ChALC, with ChALC reporting that they see no conflict and no other reason why the document should not be adopted.

**RESOLVED:** that the protocol be adopted.

**17. INVOICE APPROVALS**

Lead: Chair of Finance, Policy and Governance

**RESOLVED:** that the following invoices are approved -

- i) John Greenhall and Co. invoice for £2,544.00 for the provision of payroll services 6 April 2017 – 5 April 2018.
- ii) ChALC Affiliation fee 2018-19, plus a single copy of the Local Council Review, total payment £1,487.04.

**18. REGULAR BUDGETARY PAYMENT APPROVALS**

Lead: Chair of Finance, Policy and Governance

**RESOLVED:** that the following payment be made from the 28/19 budget:

Foden's Band - £7,500

**19. SALARY BUDGET REQUIREMENT**

It was reported that there was an underspend against the 2017/18 salaries budget of £18,486. The projection for the 2018/19 budgets has been underestimated, with one percent increase being factored as the annual 'cost of living' rise – it now appears that this could be significantly more, especially for the lower paid staff. Council is asked to transfer the 2017/18 year end surplus to the 2018/19 budget to off-set any shortfall.

**RESOLVED:** that 2017/18 Salary Surplus is transferred to the 2018/19 salary budget, to counter the increased projection of the annual cost of living rise. Total transfer £18,486(e)

**20. VAT**

Lead: Town Clerk / RFO

The Clerk reported on activities since the last meeting around gathering information relating to VAT and reported on advice received from HMRC.

The Parkinson Partnership has provided a spreadsheet, which has been designed to allow the Council to project business over 20 years, this should enable the Council to make a judgement on business and determine whether it should opt to tax.

Members were asked to consider the impact of opting to tax and how it might affect users of the Market and Town Hall, and how the impact might be mitigated.

**RESOLVED:** that a member discussion session is held, at which the Council will be able to view the impact of various financial assumptions, following which there will be a meeting of STC to determine whether the Council should 'Opt to Tax'.

NB. The meetings will take place on Thursday 26 April 2018.

**21. NOMINATION OF MAYOR FOR THE CIVIC YEAR 2018/19**

**RESOLVED:** that Cllr Hovey be nominated as Mayor for the Civic Year 2018/19.

**22. NOMINATION OF DEPUTY MAYOR FOR THE CIVIC YEAR 2018/19**

**RESOLVED:** that Cllr Muldoon be nominated as Deputy Mayor for the Civic Year 2018/19.

**23. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS FOR THE CIVIC YEAR 2018/19**

The Mayor drew attention to the number of Council meetings that have been held during the year and requested a more effective use of Committees in the future. He asked that all Committees review their Terms of Reference at the first Committee meeting of the new Civic Year.

**RESOLVED:** that the Calendar of Meetings for the Civic Year 2018/19 be approved.

**24. MEMBER'S ITEMS**

**24.1 Cllr Haines**

Led by Cllr Lowe in the absence of Cllr Haines

**Statement from Sandbach Town Council**

Following the publication of a letter in the Chronicle criticising Sandbach Town Council, Cllr Haines had drafted a response, which had the support of most Council Members. The original published letter had contained some inaccuracies and assumptions regarding STC's responsibilities, therefore it was generally agreed that a response should be sent, however, as there had not been unanimous support for the drafted response, it was not submitted; a revised version was circulated for members to consider.

Reference was made to the Communication Protocol, which had been adopted under item 16 of this agenda, and that the proposed statement contravened some of the statements contained within it. It was felt that a better way of counteracting negative statements, was to be positive and to try to meet with critics to discuss their opinions.

Generally, members did not disagree with the suggestion that Council should make a public statement, but not all could support the draft statement as written as some of the comments could be regarded as inflammatory.

**RESOLVED:** that the Mayor be responsible for re-writing a measured response, which he will circulate to members before submitting to the Chronicle for publication.

**24.2 Cllr Hoffmann**

**Lengthsman**

A proposal was made that Sandbach Town Council is to ask Cheshire East Council to devolve some minor aspects of its highways works to Sandbach Town Council, along with funding, to allow Sandbach Town Council to employ a lengthsman. A model scheme run by Herefordshire and Orcop Council's was shared.

The Clerk reported that she had contacted Orcop Parish Council to obtain more information and had been informed that whilst the scheme was still in operation, it was no longer funded by Herefordshire County Council. The Lengthsman employed by Orcop PC, is shared with several other small parishes. She then drew attention to the 'Town

Ranger' scheme at Knutsford and suggested that members consider this as a possible model for Sandbach.

**RESOLVED:** that Cllr Hoffmann prepare a feasibility study to be presented to the Assets and Services Committee for consideration.

### **24.3 Cllr Flavell**

#### **Management of Dog Mess in Sandbach**

Lead: Cllr Flavell

Reference was made to Gibson Crescent, which seems to be a particular problem area for dog mess, in particular dog mess that has been picked up and bagged, and then not deposited into a bin. It is noted that there is not a bin in this area, despite CEC being contacted on several occasions about this issue.

**RESOLVED:** that

- i) STC considers including dog waste management in its Town Strategy.
- ii) Via Ward Councillors, STC asks CEC to allocate further funds for waste bins so that they can be supplied where they are badly needed.

### **24.4 Cllr Smith**

#### **Footpaths**

Lead: Cllr Smith

Mr Boxer was thanked for his presentation, with a proposal being made in favour of all four recommendations from the Sandbach Footpaths Group.

**RESOLVED:** that the Council:

- i) Supports the efforts to extend footpath accessibility in Sandbach as described in the document 'Extending Footpath Accessibility' by The Sandbach Footpath Group (SFG), Sandbach Grassroots Disability, Sandbach Partnership and Sandbach Woodland and Wildlife Group (SWWG).
- ii) Will ensure the extension of footpath accessibility is always taken into account when planning applications are being considered.
- iii) Will support efforts to secure section 106 money from developers in order to finance the footpath schemes.
- iv) Notes the discussions between the Sandbach Town Council Cycling Working Group and the Sandbach Footpath Group in exploring possible joint cycling and footpath routes.
- v) Notes advice already provided through the CEC PROW Improvement Plan.

## **25. CORRESPONDENCE**

[Copies of all correspondence attached]

### **25.1 CEC - CCTV**

Letter dated 9 October 2017, in which STC is asked to commit to a three-year contract for the provision of CCTV within Sandbach at a cost of £5,699.86 p.a. (subject to being linked to the RPI).

**RESOLVED:** that the Council commits for three years.

### **25.2 CEC – Care4CE**

Letter dated 20 March 2018, thanking STC for its recent letter of appreciation.

**RESOLVED:** that the letter be received.

### **25.3 Eleanor Buckley and Ella Clark**

Thank you card for a donation made towards a Guiding Trip.

**RESOLVED:** that the card be received.

### **25.4 Alsager Town Council**

Email dated 4 April re. closure of Barclays Banks in Alsager and Sandbach.

A number of local residents have expressed concern about the proposed closures and the already long queues at the Town's Post Office. There is concern about how the closure of the Sandbach Branch will affect local businesses. Members were interested to hear Alsager's suggestion and agreed that it is their duty to work on behalf of residents and to contact Barclays about the closure.

**RESOLVED:** that STC contact Barclays to:

- i. Express displeasure about closure.
- ii. Request a copy of the business case which supports closure.
- iii. Work with ATC to keep at least one branch open (liaison via Clerks.)

## **26. DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next Town Council Meeting will be the AGM on Thursday 17 May 2018 at 7.00pm at the Sandbach Literary Institution.

Since the meeting, an additional meeting has been agreed to take place on Thursday 26 April 2018 at 7pm.

## **CLOSED SESSION**

Due to the confidential nature of business, public and press will be excluded from the meetings under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960

### **7. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE HELD ON 21 MARCH 2018.**

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes be noted.

The Clerk withdrew from the meeting while items 27 and 13.1 were discussed. The Deputy Mayor recorded the minutes.

### **27. TOWN CLERK END OF YEAR REVIEW**

Lead: Town Mayor

This year's review was undertaken by the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and last year's Mayor. It is proposed that in future the review will involve the Chair of the Personnel Committee, Mayor and Deputy Mayor. Ten objectives from the past year were reviewed and it was proposed that this will reduce to five objectives for the forthcoming year.

As a result of issues raised by the Clerk and comments made in the recently staff survey, an additional Personnel Committee meeting is to be arranged to agree how these issues can be resolved. Some of these issues involve contraventions of the agreed Officer-Councillor Engagement Guidance.

At 9.35pm a vote to extend the meeting was approved by members.

Proposal by Mayor and seconded by Deputy Mayor, to receive the end of year report for the Town Clerk and approve an annual increment to rise to SCP51, all members voted in favour.

**RESOLVED:** That the end of year report be received and an incremental rise to SCP 51 is approved, payable from 1 April 2018.

### **13.1 PERSONNEL COMMITTEE - COUNCILLOR-OFFICER COMMUNICATION**

The adopted document entitled 'Successful Officer-Councillor Engagement' was shared.

**RESOLVED:** that members consider if any changes to the document are required.

Meeting closed: 9:50pm

Cllr M Forster, Town Mayor

AB

TCM180412