

SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Sandbach Town Council Meeting held on Wednesday 9th February 2022 at 7.00pm, in Sandbach Town Hall.

PRESENT

Councillors: G Price Jones (Mayor)
K Flavell (Deputy Mayor)
G Merry
L Crane
S Broad
N Cook
K Seymour
R Hovey
A Nevitt
N Adams
R Hoffmann
M Muldoon
D Hegarty
S Kirkham
J Beddows
P Eaton

Also present were the Locum Town Clerk, Assistant Town Clerk and eight members of the public and press

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs: S Corcoran
S Crane
A Smith

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Price Jones

Declared an interest in agenda item 20.1 and will not participate in discussion or voting.

3. MAYORS COMMENTS

The Mayor had not formally attended any events in the short period between Council meetings but had supported some local activities.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

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

Speaker 1.

Informed the meeting of their Sandbach-based voluntary organisation and ways in which the group offers support through many on site classes and sessions and offers a safe, confidential environment to individuals of various ages. It was confirmed that the organisation plans to submit a formal grant request to Council to seek funding for future youth support projects. A current survey of requirements is underway via social media to ascertain needs for future group work.

Speaker 2

Since 2019 there had been two by-elections called at cost to Sandbach Town Council of approximately £17,000 and a further by-election recently at a further £8,200, as there is less than 12 months until the next main election and therefore 6 Council meetings, would like to ask that councillors do not support or push a by-election which would make financial sense within the timescale.

Speaker 3

Prayers at beginning of meeting are antiquated, is it time to change practice?

In response it was confirmed that STC has already formally agreed to use alternative readings. There was no prayer or reading today. Councillors were encouraged to submit appropriate suggestion to the Assistant Town Clerk so that a bank of readings is available for all meetings.

Speaker 4

A representative of Sandbach Cricket club provided information in relation to current club status and requirement for replacement cricket nets, for which they have submitted a grant for Member's consideration during the agenda. It was stated that the venue employs many local people, hosts sporting activities open to the community and supports local group bookings within their hall, such as disability disco.

Speaker 4

Having received the enquiry by email, the meeting Clerk read question from a resident in relation to the by-election and associated costs.

In response, it was verified that by-elections are called by a process outside the control of Sandbach Town Council and that there are associated by-election costs to the public purse, paid by the Town Council budget, though the Council has no responsibility or involvement in an election being called. This will be confirmed within reply to the resident.

The meeting was reconvened.

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

Resolved: That items 18 and 21 are considered with the exclusion of public and press due to Commercial Sensitivity under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

14. CEC SANDBACH MATTERS – CLLR LAURA CRANE

Cllr Crane provided details of Sandbach-specific matters underway at Cheshire East, including imminent presentation of final budget proposals to CEC's Corporate Policy Committee and heavy investment in Highways over coming years. Though short of total needed, this funding is a great improvement. Unfortunately, some highways disruption is scheduled for Sandbach due to repair work and installation of faster broadband, though this will all be advertised through usual routes and any necessary diversions in place. In news for Ettiley Heath and Wheelock, the Planning Inspectorate recently dismissed appeal for additional homes on Hind Heath road which reflects strength of strategies and locally formed and adopted documents, specifically the Sandbach Neighbourhood Plan which was referenced through the decision notice. In closing, Cllr Crane drew attention to current online surveys, including Country Parks and Ranger questionnaires.

Cllr Crane was thanked for her report and its value noted to assist people in understanding activities at Cheshire East Council.

6. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 18 JANUARY [ATTACHED].

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting are approved as a true record.

7. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING & CONSULTATION COMMITTEE HELD ON 24 JANUARY 2022 (DRAFT).

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting are noted.

8. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE HELD ON 19 JANUARY 2022 (DRAFT).

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting are noted.

9. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE FINANCE, POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 10 JANUARY 2022.

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting are noted.

10. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING – NONE HELD.

11. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EVENTS SUB-COMMITTEE – NONE HELD

12. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ASSETS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE – NONE HELD.

13. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SMALL COMMON REDEVELOPMENT SUB COMMITTEE HELD ON 26 JANUARY 2022 (DRAFT).

Resolved: The minutes are noted.

14. MATTERS ARISING FROM COMMITTEE MEETINGS

14.1 Small Common Sub-Committee

Update on the Project

[Attached: Report]

Lead: Chair of The Small Common Redevelopment Sub-Committee

Referring to the circulated report, the Chair of the Sub-Committee explained current position and requirements in moving forward the project to suggested timeline.

Several concerns were expressed during discussion in relation to prioritisation and necessity for consultation ahead of any planning application submission, in order to ascertain key stakeholder opinion on characteristics of the design. Further comment was made regarding practicality of Sub-Committee's suggestion to secure any fixed pricing from a contractor, due to ongoing trade and material cost uncertainties. It was queried whether progression at this stage, in order to obtain necessary professional support of planning advisors and quantity surveyors, should be delegated to officers to expediate process in between sub-committee meetings. This would also facilitate immediate and necessary consultation of Council's Market Staff.

During discussion it was suggested that the design be made available for public consultation as soon as possible and ahead of planning submission, however, members of the sub-committee emphasised that this will not actually be a formal public consultation to change the design itself, but is a public engagement to assist in refining.

A proposal was made to reprioritise the sequence of suggested next steps to prioritise 6 week public engagement ahead of other activities associated with this project. The proposal was seconded and carried.

Resolved: that:-

- i. The sequence of proposed actions is altered so that undertaking the 6 week public/stakeholder engagement is prioritised ahead of other activities associated with this project.
- ii. Council agrees the staged approach, subject to amendment (i) to completing the project and the timeline, subject to amendment (i), set out within the report and delegates to Interim Clerk delivery of any operational matters, in association with the Chair of the Sub-Committee
- ii. £5,000 from the allocated project budget (Small Common Redevelopment) be approved for spend in due course and as detailed within the report, for Planning and Quantity Surveyor.

**14.2 Personnel Committee
Pension Discretions Policy**

[Attached: Draft Policy]

Lead: Chair of The Personnel Committee

Resolved: The revised document is adopted.

**14.3 Personnel Committee
Employee Handbook and Officer Code of Conduct**

[Attached: Updated Handbook and Draft Document]

Lead: Chair of The Personnel Committee

Contradiction and duplication between the two draft documents were highlighted and concern expressed regarding some language used, which may not be reflective of the Council as an employer.

It was suggested that this is not necessarily the end of process but that comments can be fed back to the Chair of Personnel for continued revision of the documents.

Resolved: That the revised handbook and draft officer code of conduct documents are adopted.

**14.4 Finance Committee
Revised Terms of Reference**

[Attached: Updated ToR]

Lead: Chair of Finance Committee

Resolved: The revised Terms of Reference for the Finance, Policy and Governance Committee are adopted.

15. COUNCIL TERMS OF REFERENCE

Lead: Mayor

15.1 Council ToR

[Attached: Terms of Reference]

Resolved: The revised Terms of Reference are approved for adoption.

16. INTERIM AUDIT

[Attached: Interim Audit Report]

Lead: RFO

The RFO confirmed the report details and impact of staff shortages and various other issues which are now already completed or are part of an action plan for resolution and improvement.

Resolved: The interim report is noted.

17. PAYMENTS OVER £1500

[Attached: Payments over £1500 Approval request]

Lead: RFO

Resolved: The circulated list of payments [attached] in excess of £1500 is approved, with payment delegated to Officers.

18. OFFICE ACCOMODATION

Considered during confidential section of the meeting

Resolved: The study and payment of associated invoice, at the cost of £4188, from budget line 400-4614 (Office Accommodation) are approved.

19. ANNUAL CORPORATE RISK REVIEW - PROCUREMENT

[Attached: Procurement Corporate Risk Assessment]

Lead: Meeting Clerk

Resolved: The Procurement Corporate Risk Assessment is approved.

20. GRANT APPLICATIONS

[Attached: 2 Applications]

20.1 SANDBACH CRICKET CLUB

Cllr Price Jones did not take part in discussion or voting. The agenda item was chaired by the Deputy Mayor.

Resolved: a grant of £3000 for replacement nets is approved from budget line Community Grants (110-4530)

20.2 SANDBACH TRANSPORT FESTIVAL

Members discussed the application for an additional £12,000 of funding. It was confirmed that the festival and parade will go ahead and that this further grant is requested to replace events within the park, following conclusion of previous three year support and attendance of SpareParts.

Since the funding request was originally considered, supplementary requests have been received via email from the Festival organisers for permission to use Small Common during the event weekend and for sponsorship or free provision of Town Council Market Equipment and labour for the Festival duration.

Councillors were disappointed that, despite request of Council following earlier application, the Festival Committee had not attended any of Council's meetings to clarify breakdown of activities associated with the further £12,000 of funding requested, and expressed concern at the lack of festival organiser engagement with the Council's nominated representative.

It was stated that the festival is supported however, one day event seems to be preferred by many within the community.

Resolved: That:-

- i. the grant is refused on the grounds of insufficient information being received to support the application.
- ii. Permission to use Small Common is granted, excluding space allocated for Saturday Market and subject to receipt of necessary insurance documentation.
- iii. Equipment is not available for the festival use.

21. UPDATE ON TOWN CLERK

Considered during confidential section of the meeting.

The Locum Clerk provided update and summary of the document received.

Resolved: The document and associated actions are accepted in full and delegated to the Locum Clerk for completion as stated.

22. APPOINTMENT OF LOCUM CLERK

The Locum Clerk was thanked for all her work to date and welcomed.

Resolved: The appointment of the Locum Town Clerk as Proper Officer and RFO, under Standing Order 27, is noted.

23. COUNCILLOR RESIGNATION

A brief update regarding the resignation was received to confirm the advert is in place and that the Borough Council will contact STC in due course regarding any call for by-election.

24. MEMBERS ITEMS

There are none.

25. CORRESPONDENCE

There is none.

26. DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Town Council Meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 6th April 2022 at 7pm in Sandbach Town Hall.

Meeting Closed 9.39pm

Cllr G Price Jones, Mayor

KP

[Approved payment list as item 17 follows]

Sandbach Town Council. Payments over £1500 2022/23

Approval to delegate the below non-operational payments over £1,500 to the Officers.

Nominal Code	Item	Further Information	Total Budget	REASON
4000/6022/6023	Salaries		£418,400	To prevent delays
4001/6021	Employer NI			
4002/6022	Pension Contributions			
4003	Staff Restructure (contingency)	As per approved budget		
4100	Mayors Allowance	Paid with monthly salary run	£2,000	To prevent delays
4120	Insurance	Annual insurance	£10,000	To prevent delays
4152	HR and H&S	Annual invoice	£5,000	Three-year commitment approved at TCM22.10.2020
7000	Loan	Paid by direct debit (Budget will update dependant on Loan Repayment decision)	£29,606	To prevent delays
Cost Centre 110	Grants and Discretionary Payments	Town Crier Honorarium £750 Churchyard Maintenance £1580 Allotments £1000 RBL £250	£3,580	Annual repeat payments
4515	Concert Series	Three Year grant award FCM05.08.2021 Item 12.6 First Payment	£3,500	Committee approved three-year award
4573	Sandbach Woodland and Wildlife Group	Three Year grant award FCM05.08.2021 Item 12.2 First Payment	£2,000	Committee approved three-year award
6010	Bar Purchases	Total budget used to cover numerous orders.	£20,000	Covered by income, orders are placed on a need-by-need basis according to the vent requirements. To prevent delays.
6100	Utilities	Any invoices over £1,500	£19,000	Paid by variable direct debit, to prevent delays