

SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE ASSETS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE

This meeting will be clerked by Ceri Lloyd (Locum Town Clerk).

Please ensure that all apologies are made directly to the Clerk of the meeting no later than 6pm on the day of the meeting.

Agenda for the meeting to be held on Wednesday, 23rd February 2022 at 7.00pm in Sandbach Town Hall.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. CO-OPTION TO THE COMMITTEE

To Co-opt Cllr Nicola Cook to the Assets and Services Committee

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To provide an opportunity for Members and Officers to declare pecuniary & non-pecuniary interests in relation to any item on the agenda.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chairman of the meeting will adjourn the meeting to allow questions from members of the public.

After the questions the Chairman will reconvene the meeting.

4. ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE ABSENCE OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

Item due to commercial sensitivity and personal details being shared.

Under the Public Bodies Admissions to Meetings Act 1960.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 2 NOVEMBER 2021.

To approve the minutes of the Assets & Services meeting held 2 November 2021 as a true record.

6. MARKETS FINANCE REPORT

Lead: Meeting Chair

[Attached: Report]

Action: *To receive the report and review recommendations and spend requirements.*

7. TOWN HALL (EVENTS) UPDATE

Lead: Meeting Chair

[Attached: Report]

Action: *To receive the report*

8. MARKET CHARGES AND REVIEW

Lead: Meeting Chair

[Attached: Report from the Market Manager]

Action: *To consider recommendations and agree 2022/23 Market Charges.*

9. TOWN HALL CHARGES REVIEW

Lead: Meeting Chair

[Attached: Report]

Action: *To consider recommendations and agree 2022/23 hire fees.*

10. SMALL COMMON UPDATE

Lead: Meeting Chair

Action: *To receive the update.*

11. CEC ASSET TRANSFER POLICY

Deferred from the meeting of Assets and Services 2nd November 2021:

Members discussed CEC correspondence and updated policy, received on 30th July 2021, which had been deferred to Committee by Full Council and agreed for Cllr Crane to liaise with the relevant department at CEC and obtain their list of available assets, in due course.

During discussion, an informal list of suggested assets for possible future consideration of STC were received from Members as: Sandbach Park, Sandbach Cemetery, The Cobbles and Scotch Common.

Lead: Meeting Chair

[Attached: Email received on 30th July 2021]

Action: *To agree on next steps as required.*

12. CONDITION SURVEY UPDATE

[Condition Survey Reports have been emailed with the agenda and are available upon request]

Lead: Meeting Clerk

Action: *To provide an update on Condition Survey.*

13. PHONE BOX ADOPTION PLANS

Lead: Meeting Chair

Action: *To develop and present a proposal to Council for future
Community use of the adopted Phone Box on Jnc Mill Lane
PC01 Crewe Road, Wheelock*

14. CORRESPONDENCE

There is none.

15. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

16. DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Assets and Services Committee is Tuesday 26th April 2022 in Sandbach Town Hall.

Please note that this meeting will be recorded and the audio recording made available to the public within 5 working days of the meeting.

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SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL

ASSETS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE

Notes of the informal meeting held on Tuesday, 2nd November 2021 at 7.00pm, via zoom.

In attendance: Cllr D Hegarty
 Cllr A Smith
 Cllr L Crane
 Cllr R Hovey
 Cllr J Beddows (left 7:51)

Also in attendance were the Acting Town Clerk and Asst. Town Clerk.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs S Broad, Price Jones and R Hoffmann.

Absent without apologies: Cllr D Jack

2. CO-OPTION TO THE COMMITTEE

Members fully support Cllr Nick Adams joining the Committee.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Beddows

Declared an interest in agenda item 6 and will not participate in discussion and in any discussion relating to the matters arising complaint from previous meeting.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There being no public present the Chair did not adjourn the meeting for questions.

4. ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE ABSENCE OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

None.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 27 JULY 2021.

Members agree the minutes to be an accurate representation of the meeting held 27 July 2021.

6. MARKETS OPERATIONAL UPDATE

Cllr Beddows did not participate in the discussion

A correction to the Market Manager report was highlighted as Sandbach Town Council has not cancelled any of its markets due to adverse weather.

Members expressed some concerns during discussion of the report provided and proposal appendices; specifically in relation to the feasibility of changes for Sandbach's adverse weather routine and lack of consultation process in forming the recommendations.

It was agreed that the current adverse weather policy works well and allows staff to provide necessary and timely notice for traders of any equipment updates. The proposal delays such notification to a time at which contracted Market staff will have been on site for some time whilst awaiting a weather decision. At this time some traders may also be on site, or enroute, and potentially without necessary equipment from which to trade.

Key requirement before any changes or recommendations can be considered, is wide-ranging consultation, including all Market and Senior STC staff, traders and NABMA to ascertain suitability of changes proposed for Sandbach, benefit vs. negative impact for all and fit with current staff availability and contracted hours of work.

Increased capacity on Friday's; bringing in new traders and avoiding empty stalls is fully supported as an excellent idea.

There was some uncertainty regarding the provided list of Key Service Objectives due to missing details, such as Sandbach Town Council/Market specific reference, context of Sandbach market status and a timeline, which therefore limits any opportunity for measuring against the objectives set.

7. TOWN HALL OPERATIONAL UPDATE

A brief verbal update was received from the Assistant Town Clerk to confirm all bookings delivered in recent months and in the months following re-opening, along with numerous activities and events planned through to Christmas and the new year.

A written report will be presented to future meetings.

Members noted their thanks to the Town Hall team for continued hard work.

8. CORRESPONDENCE

8.1 Community Asset Transfer Policy

Members discussed CEC correspondence and updated policy, received on 30th July 2021, which had been deferred to Committee by Full Council and agreed for Cllr Crane to liaise with the relevant department at CEC and obtain their list of available assets, in due course.

During discussion, an informal list of suggested assets for possible future consideration of STC were received from Members as: Sandbach Park, Sandbach Cemetery, The Cobbles and Scotch Common.

9. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Updated Market report and further update from Market Manager on enhancing Market Offering.

Update on Market Manager review of Sandbach Trader Policy and Shopper Charter.

CEC Asset Transfer policy/list

Before closing the informal meeting a discussion surrounding a Market complaint (considered initially at the last Assets and Services meeting).

Cllr Beddows left the meeting at this stage.

It was confirmed that the complainant had been asked, via the Mayor, to provide supporting information to facilitate investigation, however, no further details had been received.

The Acting Clerk will write again to the complainant stating deadline for documentation to be provided. The complaint is to be closed if no reply is received and complainant notified of status in writing by the Acting Clerk.

10. DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Assets and Services Committee is Tuesday 25th January 2022 on Zoom.

Meeting Closed 8.06pm
Cllr D Hegarty, Chair.

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SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL

Report to Assets and Services Committee –23 February 2022

Indoor Market Expenditure

All units to the perimeter of the market hall are now occupied, with the exception of the former fish stall. Council has recently paid for the removal of fridge counters in situ and the stall is advertised for occupancy as either as a single unit or divided into two.

An amount of remedial work will be required on the stall(s) to make them fit for occupancy. This will include an improved floor surface and if two units, a dividing wall and the separation of lighting.

No cost has been allowed for the walls which are tiled but require a deep clean and no cost has been attributed to the replacement of the water heater within the unit which has previously been condemned.

Unit 3 Sandbach Indoor Market

Expected Cost (current quotes excluding VAT)	£
Floor Vinyl	720.00
Additional expenditure – based on Two Units	
Electric lighting upgrade/safety check and separation	250.00
Stall divide	930.00
	1,900.00

The stall vacancies will be promoted on Council Facebook and the national Market Trader News which is a recognised location for stall vacancies with a closing date for applications of Friday 18 March 2022. The aim of occupancy will be to gain footfall drivers or traders that sustain repeat business. The division to two units will allow additional diversity to the trading environment and increase revenue as an additional £24.00 per week can be gained by the separation compared with the existing rate for the single stall. Though the return on the additional expenditure is 49 weeks – the long term benefit is considered to justify the position.

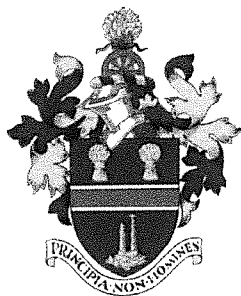
In addition to the remedial work to the vacant unit, a routine Environmental Health visit to the market café in 2021 led to a number of desired outcomes, including a washable and level floor surface and various treatments to counter and wall surfaces. It was thought that the floor surface issue was mainly cracked and missing tiles, which was rectified by concrete infill. However following direct contact with the Environmental Health Officer it is confirmed

that the floor issue is also the tile grout and slip nature of the floor. The cost to re-grout and replace several tiles is £980.00 plus VAT. The alternative is a commercial vinyl flooring with a grip property at £720.00 (this been the cheaper of three received quotes and by a Sandbach contractor).

The water heaters in the café is also requiring repair and this is expected to be circa £150.00.

Recommendation:

- That the Friday market with effect from April 1st 2022 be charged at the current concessionary rate for Saturdays of £5.50 per table.
- That the required work on the café is undertaken in accordance with the quotes received.
- That the work to upgrade the former fish stall is approved according to the quotes received with two stalls been the proposed position.



Town Hall (Events) Report

To the Assets & Services Meeting

Due to be held 23rd February 2022





Event Team Highlights

1. We currently have 22 confirmed Wedding bookings in the Diary for 2022 and the Conference and Events Team are inundated with enquiries – with confirmed bookings as far ahead as 2024!
2. Due to the popularity of our events, and of the staff involved, the venue has recently been booked by three separate clients based in the South of the UK who have located the Wedding venue information via our online marketing and social media content.
3. We are pleased to have taken bookings from a theatre group who are due to return in the spring, following success of their previous events with the Town Hall, and over coming weeks/months welcome back various Fairs and Hirers as they recommence their schedules of events following earlier lockdown and restrictions.
4. Comedy Night remains a successful key date for the Town and for the team at Comedy Hotspot as we work in supporting them with future bookings and special features within their hosted Comedy tours.
5. Following advertising of our 'special offer' event packages on social media, online and in a local Sandbach advertising directory we are now taking a large number of enquiries and bookings for additional parties and events.
6. The Breakfast with Santa event held in December was a significant highlight of 2021 for all involved; with tickets for the event selling out in just 7 days.
7. The new Event Team Member is working alongside the staff whilst training in the role and is now starting to take on some of their own events.

Looking Forward

1. Due to venue and event demand we have advertised for an additional Event Assistant (Part time, 20 hours per week) to assist in event delivery and hope to interview in early March.
2. Following recruitment and training of the Event Assistants, the Conference and Events Team will resume focus on various methods of generating new bookings for the Town Hall and Market Hall.
3. Summer events are in planning stages for a repeat of the successful free school holiday activities and also to set a schedule for the (payable) children's cinema which was, again, a very popular activity when held on previous occasions.
4. The team intend to increase in house events, such as tributes and themed party nights, and to secure a larger number of daytime/weekday bookings which have decreased significantly post-lockdown.



5. Sandbach Market Town Festival is planned for Saturday 10th September and is organised in its entirety by the part-time Conference and Event Officer, who is supported by some of the staff and Councillors on the day of the event.
6. Following its Covid related cancellation in 2021 the sell-out Panto events are booked for 2022 and the Breakfast with Santa will make a welcome return... if Father Christmas has time for a pit-stop in Sandbach Town Hall.

Challenges

1. Pandemic. Inevitably, the closure of the hall impacted income and in later months with various restrictions there has been general reluctance for many hirers to return until recently. With the popularity and safety for many organisations and clients in hosting meetings via zoom, our daytime bookings have yet to regain levels previously achieved.
2. Staffing has remained a challenge, for various reasons, during the past year and throughout Covid pandemic. Thanks in no small part to the diligence, hard work and commitment of some STC Team Members, there has been negligible impact on individual venue bookings.
3. Several staff have again supported Council through accommodating additional responsibilities in order to reduce impact on business and organisational function, following resignation/retirement. As a result, specifically within events and Town Hall the loss in co-worker hours is (95 hours per week) with recruitment in place to fill 20 hours with the Event Assistant.
4. Due to the number of back to back bookings Friday – Sunday, it has become a significant challenge to maintain the team's high standards of venue preparation and, as such, we are currently exploring options to overcome this issue faced.
5. Training staff and casuals whilst providing 'business as usual' can definitely be a challenge but the Conference and Events team continue to work and learn together. Continually developing through discussions and implementing improved ways of working and are looking forward to a busy and exciting 2022/23.

Jayne Barber
Acting Senior Conference and Events Officer

15th February 2022

Please note: quarterly figures are not attached due to financial reporting issue.

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Sandbach Markets

Charge Review

The current retail climate as indicated in the general report is one of uncertainty. However the easing of restrictions relating to the COVID pandemic has seen a slight resurgence of activity across retail centres as the consumer begins to re-emerge and demand grows for goods and services.

The pandemic has impacted not only the rhythm of life but world-wide manufacturing and production alongside supply chains and resulted in both shortages and inflation.

The UK Consumer Price Index stood at 3.5% for December with estimated average of 4.0% expected for 2022. The Retail Price Index having a higher rate of 5.0% for December and an estimated 5.4% for 2022.

It is now some years since any increase in charges at Sandbach and the authority has been supportive of the trader fraternity both during the refurbishment program for the indoor market and the period of the pandemic lockdowns.

The current situation regarding the market finances remains one of the authority subsidising the activity which is to be applauded from a social inclusion and interaction stance. Ultimately any decision to subsidise an activity is a decision of the authority and may be valid but there is also a need to where possible reduce such subsidies. Many authorities consider that a non-statutory activity such as markets should at least break-even so as not to be a financial burden.

The current level of trading, the current stall charges and with respect to the outdoor market the cost of stall erection coupled with the reduced number of traders makes break-even a difficult short term prospect and would require charge increases that could not be sustained by traders at this current time.

An increase is however realistic and will start the process of re-aligning trading with budget expectation.

As such it is considered that the indoor market stall (shuttered) charges should rise by 3% with effect from 1 April 2022.

A small shuttered stall currently charged at £45.00 for the three day trading week would rise to £46.35 per week, an increase of 45 pence per trading day.

A larger stall at £60.00 per week would rise to £61.80 per week an increase of 60 pence per day.

The benches or table tops would increase as follows:

Thursday - Currently £11.50 - No Change - As of 1 April 2022 £11.50

Friday - Currently no charge for traders who also trade on Thursday and Saturday - As of 1 April 2022 £6.00 per bench for all

Saturday - Currently £5.50 for those who also trade on a Thursday - As of 1 April 2022 £6.00 per bench for all

The impact on a trader with two benches who currently trades on Thursday, Friday and Saturday is an increase of £6.50 for the three days or £2.17 per trading day. If a current Thursday and Saturday trader ceases to trade on a Friday then the increase is 50p for the two days or 25p per trading day.

It is not considered that there be any increase in the cost of the storage cupboards within the indoor market for the period 2022/2023 currently £2.50 per cupboard.

Outdoor Market

The greatest issue is that of stall erection. A withdrawal of this service would save in the region of £10,000 per annum. However given that the majority of the outdoor traders are currently of advancing age and as such unlikely to be willing or able to present their own stalls then an initial collapse of the outdoor market would be likely.

An attempt will be made to bolster trader numbers as 2022 progresses in order to alleviate some of this budgetary pressure, in the short term a small increase in charges is considered appropriate and cannot be considered unreasonable for the traders concerned.

Current space (own stall) £20.00 – As of 1 April 2022 - £21.00

Current 6m frontage or above (own stall) £20.00 - As of 1 April 2022 - £22.00

Stall Hire

Stall hire 3m x 3m currently £4.50 – As of 1 April 2022 £5.00

Stall hire 6m x 3m currently £6.50 - As of 1 April 2022 £7.50

For a trader using a provided 3m x3m gazebo the daily charge will increase from £24.50 to £26.00

For a trader using a provided 6m x3m gazebo the daily charge will increase from £26.50 to £28.50

It is not considered that there should be any additional cost for stall tables time.

Market Stall Hire

Hiring of the outdoor market stalls is occasional but also presents a risk. Pre-Christmas a loan of stalls to a nearby authority resulted in a damaged stall which as a result cannot now be used at Sandbach.

As such it is considered that gazebos should have a hire cost attached as follows which does not include transportation.

3m x 3m gazebo - £30.00 per day with an agreed additional time allowance for collection and return dates.

6m x 3m gazebo - £45.00 per day with an agreed additional time allowance for collection and return dates.

The above to include weights and side sheets subject to agreement.

All hire to be subject repair or replacement cost as a result of items returned damaged or otherwise lost.

Folding tables £2.50 per day with an agreed additional time allowance for collection and return dates.

This does not prevent the Council or by delegation Market Management allowing a gazebo or gazebos to be used at no charge by a charity or community benefit group or otherwise as the authority may determine from time to time.

Non Authority Markets

As part of the soon to be proposed market policy it is considered that any third party who wishes to operate a market within the market boundary of Sandbach will be required if so granted to have a licence to operate. The licence will have a charge based on the activity. No such charge is currently in force and it is therefore proposed that this form a later decision process for committee pending advancement of the Market Rights Policy.

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Report to Assets and Services – January 2022

Town Hall Fees and Charges.

Purpose of the Report

To seek Committee approval to freeze Town Hall Fees and Charges for 2022.

Report:

In January 2020, the Assets and Services Committee reviewed the Operation Report on Town Hall pricing and resolved that:

- i. The pricing rates for the year 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 were approved.
- ii. Authority is delegated to the Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk to review and authorise, at their discretion, discount rates and incentive packages proposed by the Conference and Events staff, where business occupancy and financial growth is evident to support the offer rate.
- iii. The effectiveness of the delegated approval scheme for offers and incentives to be reviewed against booking history.
- iv. No change to the fees confirmed for all existing bookings.

Sandbach Town Hall is currently experiencing a large increase in bookings for parties and events through the special 'offers' created however, we remain high cost for day to day bookings and community use in comparison to neighbouring venues.

Whilst it could be considered that the recent increase in bookings ought to result in increase in full day/evening events, an increase will not serve to encourage daytime meeting or facility use; particularly where many are still using zoom. As such, at this stage we would suggest a review in 6-12 months, once staff are able to ascertain daytime business need, following the Covid impact on meetings and events.

It is also recommended that the Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk delegated authority to review, and authorise at their discretion, discount rates and incentive packages proposed by the Conference and Events staff, where business occupancy and financial growth is evident to support the offer rate.

These offers will be particularly useful over coming months, whilst we attract new weekday/daytime events where prices have previously prevented a booking being received. We have staff on site Mon – Fri, 8 – 5 and so there is no additional staffing cost associated with these bookings.

Recommendation:-

It is recommended that:

- i. The price rates for the year 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 remain as current, with review between 6 – 12 Months (to be specified by the Committee).
- ii. The Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk are delegated to review, and authorise at their discretion, discount rates and incentive packages proposed by the Conference and Events staff, where business occupancy and financial growth is evident to support the offer rate.

Jayne Barber
14/02/2022

ATTACHED : Full Price List (Confidential Document for Council/Staff only)

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Subject: [OFFICIAL] Community Asset Transfer Policy

Dear Colleague,

You may be aware that the Council has recently refreshed its policy on community asset transfer and this has been put to the Economy and Growth Committee on the 15th July. For ease of reference please find a link to the meeting papers, where you can find the decision paper, and a copy of the draft policy that was agreed by the Committee.

<http://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=960&Mid=8666>

Earlier in the year an engagement exercise was undertaken with Town and Parish Councils and we have received some helpful feedback from this exercise. I would note that we are due to undertake a further engagement exercise on the policy and I thought it relevant to highlight this to you. Once this exercise is opened for feedback I have asked my colleague, Paul Carter, to let you have a copy of the link for your information.

Needless to say I hope that this information is of assistance to you.

Best Regards,

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