

SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of Sandbach Town Council meeting held on Thursday 1st July 2021,
Sandbach Town Hall at 7pm**

PRESENT

Councillors K Flavell (in the Chair)

 R Hovey

 G Merry

 S Corcoran

 R Hoffman

 K Seymour

 S Kirkham

 M Muldoon

 D Hegarty

 S Broad

Also present were approximately 15 members of the public.

Prayers were led by Cllr Corcoran.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors G Price-Jones
 M Lea
 I Williams
 L Crane
 S Crane
 J Beddows
 A Smith
 Jack (Apologies were late)

Absent without apologies

Councillors Ashcome-Hurt
 Eaton

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Corcoran, in the interest of openness and transparency, as the Leader of Cheshire East Council, declared a non-pecuniary interest in items 13.4 and 21. He did not vote on these items.

Cllr Flavell declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Cheshire East Councillor.

3. MAYORS COMMENTS

Cllr Flavell chaired the meeting in the absence of the Mayor, and therefore did not make any comments.

A resolution was proposed and seconded in line with Standing Orders 15a and 16a and pursuant to Standing Order 10a (v) and stated that

This Council resolves to appoint Dr Mark Bailey as the Town Clerk/RFO until further notice.

RESOLVED That the above resolution is approved.

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

Speaker Number One

It was requested that the proposal to fund the 317 bus between Sandbach and Alsager Town Councils be passed under agenda item 21.

Speaker Number Two

It was noted that the diversity and inclusion policies will not be brought in until the next Annual Council meeting. Could they be brought in sooner and could there be training for councillors in this area of work. Could the diversity champion promote diversity in the council itself in terms of membership. The Deputy Mayor said that people from all backgrounds are encouraged to stand for election.

Speaker Number Three

Why has the cemetery not been registered as Newcastle Road, Sandbach? The Deputy Mayor said that this would be checked.

Speaker Number Four

Alarmed by Cheshire East Council not making use of land next to the cemetery for additional burial plots. More facilities are required and asking the Town Council to support this. The Deputy Mayor said that this would be discussed later in the agenda.

Speaker Number Five

Looking to get the cemetery re-allocated and concerned that other cemeteries in Cheshire East are being approved. The Deputy Mayor pointed out that the proposed cemetery in Shavington is not a Cheshire East property.

Speaker Number Six

Concerned about losing two full time employees at Sandbach Cemetery and asked for Sandbach TC to approach Cheshire East to ask for full-time members of staff to work at the cemetery. A friends group will be established to bring cemetery up to standard. Motion is to be discussed at the meeting. Cllr Corcoran stated that staff had not been moved from the cemetery.

Speaker Number Seven

Pleased to see the item relating to funding for the Sandbach Partnership deferred to gather more information. Is the Partnership diverse and has the population been consulted sufficiently. The Deputy Mayor said that a written response would be prepared, and the speaker will send comments to the Council in writing.

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

RESOLVED That under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, public and press will be excluded whilst item 20 is considered.

5. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS HELD ON 8 APRIL 2021 AND 6 MAY 2021 (ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING)

RESOLVED That the minutes be accepted as an accurate record.

6. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING AND CONSULTATION COMMITTEE HELD ON 19 APRIL 2021

RESOLVED That the minutes are noted.

7. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE HELD ON 25 MARCH 2021, 1 APRIL 2021, AND 27 APRIL 2021

RESOLVED That the minutes are noted.

8. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE, POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 29 APRIL 2021

RESOLVED That the minutes are noted.

9. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE – NO MEETINGS HELD

RESOLVED The minutes were not available at the time of the meeting.

10. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EVENTS SUB-COMMITTEE HELD ON 7 APRIL 2021

RESOLVED That the minutes are noted.

11. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ASSETS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE – NO MEETINGS HELD

RESOLVED The minutes were not available at the time of the meeting.

12. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SMALL COMMON REDEVELOPMENT SUB-COMMITTEE HELD ON 19 MAY 2021

RESOLVED That the minutes be noted.

13. MATTERS ARISING FROM COMMITTEE MEETINGS

13.1 Finance, Policy and Governance Committee - Annual Direct Debit List

Lead: Chair of FP&G Committee

Action:

- i. To approve the continuation of paying suppliers by Direct Debit.*
- ii. To approve the continuation of paying suppliers by BAGS.*

RESOLVED Members approved this resolution.

13.2 Finance, Policy and Governance Committee - Equality Policy

Lead: Chair of FP&G

Action:

That the Council approves adoption of the Equality Policy.

A discussion took place on the timing of the appointment of a Diversity Champion for the Council. In addition, it was proposed that the Policy should not be approved until an implementation plan was in place. This amendment was defeated and the Policy was adopted.

13.3 Small Common Refurbishment Sub-Committee – Small Common Refurbishment (Next Phase)

Lead: Cllr Hegarty

Action:

To approve a period of public consultation and to make available a budget of £951 (Inclusive of VAT) for this purpose. Costs will be met via the Committed Reserves for the 'Car Park'.

A discussion took place on this item, and it was agreed to add online consultation to the resolution. The resolution was approved.

13.4 Planning and Consultation Committee – Sandbach Cemetery

Lead: Chair of Planning and Consultation Committee

Action:

To agree on any action to be taken by Sandbach Town Council.

A discussion took place under this item. Cllr Merry stated that the existing cemetery will be full soon and residents will have to go out of the town. There is land next to the cemetery which could be used.

It was proposed that Sandbach TC write to Cheshire East Council to enquire when and under what circumstances was a decision taken not to use this land for the cemetery and to ask Cheshire East to re-consider this decision.

It was pointed out that consultation took place as part of developing a strategy in 2018 by Cheshire East Council but it appeared that responses had been ignored.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** to approach Cheshire East Council and ask them to reconsider this matter for the benefit of the people of Sandbach. Letter to be sent to the Leader, Chief Executive and Director of Place at Cheshire East Council.

14. FINANCE MATTERS

Lead: Chair of FP&G Committee

14.1 Annual Audit 2020/21

Internal Audit

Action:

To receive the Internal Audit report and note comments.

This was **RESOLVED** by the Council.

External Audit – Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)

It was noted that an approach had been made to the external auditors (PKF Littlejohn) for an extension to deadline for submission of audit documents.

Action:

To complete section 1 (Annual Governance Statement) and approve the Accounting Statement.

This was **RESOLVED** by the Council – all items were marked ‘yes’ on the Annual Governance Statement and the Accounting Statement was also approved.

14.2 John Greenall & Co Invoice

Action:

To approve payment of invoice (amount £2,450 plus VAT) for services.

This was **RESOLVED** by the Council.

14.3 Waterplus Invoice

Action:

To approve payment of invoice (amount £2,777.67) for water charges.

This was **RESOLVED** by the Council.

14.4 Barnes Walker Invoice

Action:

To approve payment of £2624.40 (Inc VAT) for Landscape Design Services for the Small Common CarPark Project. Payment to be allocated to committed reserve line 332 Car Park.

This was **RESOLVED** by the Council.

15. SANDBACH PARTNERSHIP FUNDING

This item was deferred from the Town Council meeting of 8th April 2021 pending further information.

Lead: Cllr S Broad

Action:

To approve a contribution of £5000 towards Sandbach Partnership core funding for 2020-2021.

A discussion took place on this item. Cllr Broad said that this is a request to grant the Partnership £5,000 as the Town Council element of funding for events over the next six months. The resolution was seconded by Cllr Corcoran, who asked that a Service Level Agreement be drawn up with the Partnership, as well as seeing the budget of the Partnership for the forthcoming year. Members were concerned about statements made online by the Partnership and did not vote for the resolution as a result. Other Members voted for the resolution but had concerns about the inclusivity of the Partnership.

The Council **RESOLVED** to grant the funding but asked that the SLA be developed and that Cllr Broad pass on comments about inclusivity.

16. LIFT REPAIRS

Lead: Acting Clerk

Action:

To note the emergency approval of the lift repair by the Town Clerk under section 4.5 of the Financial Regulations.

Members expressed disappointment that the lift needs to be repaired again and the Deputy Mayor said that the work already done would be checked.

This was **RESOLVED** by the Council.

17. CHRISTMAS LIGHTS 2021

Lead: Acting Clerk

Action:

- i. *To receive the report.*
- ii. *To agree £1500 additional funding for the maintenance of the existing scheme, funded via general reserves.*
- iii. *To agree £2500 funding for the switch on event, funded via general reserves and to delegate delivery of the Event to the Town Clerk's Office, under the direction of the Events Sub- committee.*

A discussion took place on this item. It was proposed to support the £2,500 funding for the switch on event, but not the £1,500 so as to investigate options for the tree.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve items i. and iii. and to reject item ii.

18. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2021-22

Lead: Acting Clerk

Action:

To approve the new calendar for STC Meetings 2021-22.

This was **RESOLVED** by the Council.

19. STAFF APPRAISALS

Lead: Deputy Mayor

Action:

To give permission to the Chair of Personnel and Deputy Mayor carry out staff appraisals.

The Deputy Mayor commented that the appraisals should have taken place some time ago and need to be held as staff are being denied an increment.

This was **RESOLVED** by the Council.

20. EXTERNAL APPOINTMENT

Lead: The Mayor

Action:

To approve appointment of an external person to assist inoperational matters in the absence of the Clerk.

Discussion on this item was moved to Part B of the agenda (see minute 4).

The Council **RESOLVED** to appoint an external person to investigate complaints involving the Council and also **RESOLVED** to appoint an external proper officer over a period of time until the Council is able to internally fulfil this position (see minute 3).

21.317 BUS SERVICE

Lead: The Mayor

Action:

To agree on any action to be taken by Sandbach Town Council.

A discussion took place on this item. The proposal was to request Alsager, and Sandbach Town Councils agree to joint fund the bus service. Members expressed concerns about the amount of funding involved in this matter and the ongoing commitment required by the Town Council.

It was **RESOLVED** to write to the MP about the funding of public transport and also to contact Cheshire East Council to ask for their views on this matter. It was also **RESOLVED** to pass onto the Environment Committee to develop proposals further.

22. MEMBERS ITEMS

There were no issues raised under this agenda item.

23. CORRESPONDENCE

The following items of correspondence had been received by the Town Council.

- *Email concerning the CEC Welcome Back Fund, received on 7 April.*
It was agreed to seek further information on this matter.

24. DATE, TIME, AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Town Council Meeting will take place on Wednesday 22nd September 2021 at 7pm (Sandbach Town Hall).