

SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Sandbach Town Council held on 9 July 2020 at 7.00pm, via Zoom.

PRESENT

Councillors: G Price Jones (Town Mayor)
G Merry
K Flavell
L Crane
D Jack
K Seymour
S Kirkham
M Muldoon
I Williams
J Beddows
A Smith
D Hegarty
R Hoffmann
S Corcoran
S Crane
P Eaton
R Hovey
S Broad
M Lea O'Mahoney
S Ashcombe Hurt

Also present were ten members of the public and press, the Assistant Town Clerk, Town Ranger and Operational Support Officer.

A prayer was read by Cllr Merry.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

This item was not referenced during the meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr L Crane

Items 14.1, 14.2 and 17.3 as a Cheshire East Councillor, and will leave the room during item discussion.

3. MAYORS COMMENTS

Due to regulations of Covid-19 physical meetings have not been attended though an online Concert Series, the first Zoom concert on the Mayoral invite list, was greatly enjoyed and the Mayor expressed his thanks to the event organiser.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Town Mayor adjourned the meeting for questions from Members of the public.

Speaker 1.

Asked what individual members – and Council as a whole - would be doing to ensure Sandbach moves forward as an anti-racist Town?

In response, the resident was advised that Council should look to improving links with the youth, to listen and to learn, in order to ensure all residents feel safe and welcome in the Town. Anti-racism is supported by those who responded to the speaker.

Speaker 2

Raised several queries relating to adherence to the Code of Conduct, Committee responsibility for adopting guidelines, freedom of speech and comportment of representatives of Council in order to conform with Data Protection Policies (DPP). Clarification was provide from the Town Clerk and Town Mayor regarding the role of Finance, Policy and Governance Committee in forming policies which are then adopted by Council, that all Members are obliged to adhere to the Code of Conduct and conform to the DPP, and that any suggested breach be a matter for the Monitoring Officer.

Speaker 3

Queried Christmas Lights and some trader opinion that the lights are not as good as others within Cheshire. A forthright approach can be beneficial in these instances, to secure improved lighting for the Town.

It was confirmed in response that a majority of Council agreed on the budget for 2020 lighting and any decision regarding the 2021 scheme will again be a Council decision and in accordance with post Covid-19 Council finances.

The meeting was reconvened.

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

Resolved: That item 19 be considered with the exclusion of the public and press, under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

5. **TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 14 MAY AND 11 JUNE (AGM) 2020.**

Resolved: that the minutes of the meetings be approved as a true record.

6. **TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE PLANNING & CONSULTATION COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD ON 1 JUNE AND 15 JUNE 2020.**

Resolved: that the minutes of the meetings be approved as a true record.

7. **TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE HELD ON 19 MAY 2020.**

Resolved: that the minutes of the meetings be approved as a true record.

8. **TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE FINANCE, POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – NO MEETINGS HELD.**

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

10. **TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EVENTS SUB-COMMITTEE – NO MEETINGS HELD.**

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

12. **MATTERS ARISING FROM COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

There were none. The Clerk confirmed staff are aware of items pending Committee review and these will be brought to each meeting for action/closure.

13. **STANDING ORDER 27 EMERGENCY USAGE REPORT**

The Clerk referenced her agenda report and advised that the emergency standing order had been used for a five-week Market Trader discount, following Covid closure, which requires retrospective approval. The offer was well-received by those attending to trade.

Resolved: That Council supports and agrees to the decisions taken under Standing Order 27.

14. **COVID-19**

Matters relating to Covid-19

14.1 **CEC Social Distancing Measures**

Reasoning for the proposed action was detailed for Members, including impact of temporarily closing disabled bay to accommodate social distancing rules, subsequent bearing on blue badge parking and restrictions on deliveries to some shops.

It was suggested, in unprecedented times such as these, that this Council learns and applies the lesson to future consultations by ensuring that all Ward Councillors be proactive in discussing content of notices/consultations with their Constituents, where possible, and provide timely response or feedback in order to maintain safety of visitors and encourage return to the Town Centre.

Resolved: Sandbach Town Council welcomes efforts to encourage residents back into the Sandbach town centre and thanks local traders for their efforts to promote social distancing to protect shoppers.

14.2 Active Travel Scheme

Members were encouraged to submit their feedback to the Planning and Consultation Committee for discussion.

Resolved: That the Active Travel documentation be presented to the Planning and Consultation Committee for consultation response, in due course.

14.3 Covid-19 Response Network

A brief verbal update was received confirming work undertaken to progress and develop the Sandbach People Helping People scheme, including communicating with residents in need of support, reaching those wishing to volunteer to help and co-ordinating the daily requests for assistance and responding to queries or concerns. It is anticipated the current scheme will remain in place for some time and that requirements for further support should be considered by the Council, in order to assist those impacted by Covid-19 within our community, wherever possible.

Thanks were expressed to all involved.

Resolved: the verbal update is received.

14.4 Wakes Fair

Having received the Clerk's circulated agenda report together with subsequent emails and risk assessment from the Fairground Operator, members discussed the hosting of the 2020 Wakes Fair, staffing requirements and mitigating risk in line with current Government Covid-19 guidelines.

Resolved: That the Wakes Fair should not take place in September 2020 on the basis of increased risk due to Covid-19 and lack of a robust event Risk Assessment.

15. FINANCE MATTERS

15.1 Annual Audit and Governance

Having received a verbal update on the regular processes and strict annual timetable for audit compliance, the Clerk was asked to explain the Internal Auditor statements, which detail nonconformity in displaying proper notice and lack of completeness check for Party in the Park ticket sales. It was confirmed these areas will be addressed however, it is not yet clear whether a qualified external audit will be received as a result.

Page four AGAR was highlighted by the Clerk and explanation received that this section remains blank, as per previous year's auditor comment, until approved by Council.

Having received a query relating to the response for Item 4, which requires that 'we provide proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights..', it was confirmed that this will not be ticked as 'yes' due to response of the Internal Auditor.

Resolved: that:-

- i. The Internal Audit is noted and approved.
- ii. The end of year accounts are approved.
- iii. The Annual Return is approved, with item 4 to be marked 'no', and signed.

15.2 Bank Signatories

Each year the signatories are updated in line with changes to Chair/Vice Chair and Mayor/Deputy Mayor. An extension of up to 6 months is requested for this year due to restrictions on accessing bank whilst in lockdown and with some staff shielding.

Resolved: That an extension of up to 6 months is approved for this year's new signatories to be set in place with the bank.

15.3 NDP Dropbox

Maximum costs to provide 12 months NDP Drop box access were received, though it is anticipated that actual spend, based on number of access accounts required, will be £350-£400 for the year. There is currently £200 in budget, therefore would result in an overspend.

Resolved: That spend of up to £1,000 is approved for the NDP Dropbox account.

15.4 Social Media Policy

With Social Media and current pandemic resulting in increased online communications, Members received a reminder regarding the adopted

Social Media policy and potential impact on reputation of the Council when failing to adhere to the document.

A named vote was requested.

In Favour: G Price Jones, G Merry, K Flavell, L Crane, K Seymour
S Kirkham, M Muldoon, I Williams, J Beddows, A Smith
D Hegarty, R Hoffmann, S Corcoran, S Crane, P Eaton
R Hovey, S Broad, M Lea O'Mahoney

Abstain: D Jack

Against: None.

Resolved: Members received the reminder to abide by the adopted Social Media Policy.

15.5 Sandbach Transport Festival

Having received the 2019 Festival Report and email from the Transport Festival Treasurer regarding funding, Members discussed the festival requirements and scope to increase 2021 contribution ahead of Council's 2021/22 budget setting.

Concern was expressed with regard to requirement for increasing contributions and reduction in private sponsorship.

Resolved: That:-

- i. The 2020 Funding should not be returned, on the basis that it is used towards the event cost for next year.
- ii. Council will accept representations from the Transport Festival Committee later in the year, ahead of budget setting, to receive further funding requirements in line with grant policy.

Due to time available and quantity of items to be discussed, it was agreed that the remaining agenda items be moved to a newly scheduled meeting next week. No new items to be included.

Resolved: that agenda items 15.6 to 20 be moved to a meeting now due to be held 16 July, 7pm via zoom.

Meeting closed 9.22pm

Cllr G Price Jones, Town Mayor

Meeting Clerk: Ann Banks

Minutes completed from audio recording 11.8.2020 KP