

SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Sandbach Town Council Meeting held on Thursday, 14 January 2021 at 7.00pm, via Zoom.

PRESENT

Councillors: G Price Jones
K Flavell
G Merry
I Williams
L Crane
S Crane
S Corcoran
J Beddows
K Seymour
P Eaton
R Hovey
A Smith
R Hoffmann
M Lea
M Muldoon
D Hegarty
S Kirkham

Also present were the Finance Officer, Events Officer, Town Ranger, Operational Support Officer and 10 members of the public and press.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs: S Broad, D Jack.

Absent without apologies: Cllr S Ashcombe Hurt

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Beddows

Declared an interest in agenda items 10.1 and 10.2.

Cllr Corcoran

Declared that he is the leader of Cheshire East Council and following items related to CEC: 10.3, 10.4 Skate Park, 13 Budget/Precept, 17 ANSA.

Cllr advised that this declaration was made in the interest of openness and transparency and not considered a prejudicial interest,

Cllr L Crane

Advised that she is a Cabinet Member of CEC.

Cllr Flavell

Advised that she is a Cabinet Member of CEC.

3. MAYORS COMMENTS

The Mayor was pleased to see many in attendance for the meeting and confirmed that he had judged the annual shop window display competition in December and presented the award to the winner: The Flower Shop.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Mayor adjourned the meeting to allow questions from members of the public and clarified allotted time for the address of questions and statements.

Speaker 1

Queried parity of recently safeguarding Council Staff though not effecting a duty of care to Members of the public without adverse response from individuals; Members of the public should feel they can raise issues with Town or Borough Councillors and participate in local politics and should be protected from abuse and stigma when voicing a point of view, or when contacting a Councillor, on local issues of any topic. How is this being tackled within the Town Council and wider community?

The speaker further referenced creation of Dementia Friendly shopping within the Town and welcomed the proposed Wellbeing day.

Speaker 2

Seconded the views of the first speaker and queried the status of Council's Equality Policy review.

Following questions the Town Mayor reconvened the Town Council Meeting.

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

Resolved: That items 7, 11 and 19 should be considered with the exclusion of the public and press, under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 due to Personnel nature.

5. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 15 OCTOBER AND 22 OCTOBER 2020 .

Resolved: That the minutes be approved as true records of the meetings held 15 October and 22 October 2020.

6. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE PLANNING & CONSULTATION COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD ON 2 AND 23 NOVEMBER AND 9 DECEMBER 2020 (DRAFT).

Resolved: That the minutes be noted.

7. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE HELD ON 5 NOVEMBER 2020 (CONFIDENTIAL: DRAFT). CONFIDENTIAL

Resolved: That the draft minutes be noted.

8. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE FINANCE, POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12 NOVEMBER 2020 (DRAFT).

Resolved: That the minutes be noted.

9. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ASSETS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON 3 NOVEMBER 2020 (DRAFT).

Resolved: That the minutes be noted.

10. MATTERS ARISING

10.1 Assets and Services

Cllr Beddows did not vote or participate in discussion of this item.

The Meeting Clerk confirmed that, due to significant community impact of Covid, that A&S had resolved to defer reviewing rents for 2020/21 and commence the next review of Town Hall and Market rents/fees at its next meeting in April.

It was further confirmed, on behalf of the Town Clerk, that the Shop Unit rents have not been reviewed and will be an item for discussion at the next Council meeting.

Resolved: That Council notes Assets and Services Committee resolution and agrees the 2020 Market and Town Hall rent review deferment to commence April 2021.

10.2 Finance, Policy & Governance – Write off

Cllr Beddows did not vote or participate in discussion of this item.

Chair of Finance advised Members that investigations had been performed and were detailed within the agenda report, though the money remained missing. To prevent similar issue occurring the Finance Committee had subsequently reviewed and amended the Cash Handling Policy and the revised version would be presented to their next Committee Meeting.

The Finance Officer/Acting RFO verified final figure as £483.00.

Resolved: That Council approve the write off of the £483.00 against the Market (Indoor and Outdoor) budget line.

10.3 Neighbourhood Plan Working Group – Amendment of Wording

The Working Group chair referenced the circulated Sandbach NDP Phase 2 text amendment for policy HC4 and stated that JLE3 Policy wording was to be expanded, with support of CCA, in due course.

Resolved: That the amending wording, as provided, is approved.

10.4 Skate Park Working Group

In the absence of the Working Group Lead, an update was received on the Skate Park project, including details of previous consultation responses and site reviews undertaken. In order to provide necessary details regarding costs and challenges of this project, a proposal for a

feasibility study was made, at cost estimated to be approximately £3,600.

Several concerns were raised regarding outdated consultation, existing use of the proposed site area and requirement for input response from Friends of Sandbach Park and those residents impacted by the proposed location. It was confirmed that any ownership and ongoing maintenance of the skate park would require negotiation with Cheshire East, as the landowner.

Resolved: That Sandbach Town Council commissions a feasibility study to install a skatepark within Sandbach Town Park, to be funded from the Skate Park committed reserves.

10.5 Personnel Committee – Working From Home

Members were advised that this agenda item was presented following recommendation of the Personnel Committee (5 November 2020) and that at no time had staff requested an allowance for working from home. Those Staff in attendance for this agenda item have previously confirmed, for reasons verified at the Personnel Meeting, they would not be claiming or seeking any such allowance.

Resolved: That a working from home allowance of £6 per week is to be made for any staff member wishing to claim that amount.

11. STANDING ORDER 27 DECISIONS

CONFIDENTIAL

Resolved: The Standing Order 27 Emergency Decisions detailed within the circulated report, relating to Markets, Occupational Health and Staff Email are noted and supported.

12. LOAN REPAYMENT

Following earlier Committee discussions, Members were asked to review the loan repayment options provided and advised that the decision will subsequently impact the draft budget due to be reviewed and ratified.

Resolved: That:-

- i) The repayment of loan reference PW502858 is approved.
- ii) The overspend on budget line 400-4629 is approved and noted.
- iii) Council delegates the process to commence the payment to the Responsible Financial officer, with the final figure being provided for Council.

13. 2021-2022 BUDGET

The Chair of Finance detailed the process followed in drafting the budget, which includes two publicly held discussion sessions, to which all Members were invited, circulation of resulting draft document by email to all Members for comment and a further copy provided with the agenda papers for review.

The current budget requires precept of £689,544 and demonstrates a decrease of -1.04% per property.

Thanks were expressed to the Finance Officer/Acting RFO for her hard work in preparing and adjusting the budget documents throughout the process.

During debate regarding the draft budget and recent suggestion for Skate Park funding inclusion, it was confirmed that at all previous discussions Members had sought not to increase the precept and to maintain a balanced budget during the difficult times faced by everyone.

An amendment was proposed and seconded to add £25,000 to into Committed Reserves for a Skatepark. A Member request to withdraw the amendment, due to CEC interest in the land, was raised however, following further discussion, the amendment went to a named vote.

For: Cllrs, Corcoran, Smith, Hegarty, Eaton, Price Jones and Flavell

Against: Cllrs, Muldoon, Merry, Hovey, Seymour, Lea, Kirkham, Williams

Abstention: Cllrs, Hoffmann, Beddows, L Crane, S Crane

The amendment was lost.

Resolved: That:-

- i) The draft budget and precept of £689,544 are approved for 2021-2022.
- ii) The Committed Reserve year end movement is approved.
- iii) Submission of the precept request to CEC is delegated to the Acting/Town Clerk, to meet the submission deadline.
- iv) The regular payments listed below, in excess of £1500, are approved and payments are to be delegated to Officers.

Nominal Code	Item	Further Information	Total Budget
4000/6022/6023	Salaries		£358,550
4001/6021	Employer NI		
4002/6022	Pension Contributions		
4100	Mayors Allowance	Paid with monthly salary run	£2,000
4120	Insurance	Annual insurance £6,000	£10,000
4152	HR and H&S	Annual invoice	£4,000
7000	Loan	Paid by direct debit (Budget will update dependant on Loan Repayment decision)	£29,606
Cost Centre 110	Grants and Discretionary Payments	Town Crier Honorarium £750 Churchyard Maintenance £1580 Allotments £1000 RBL £250	£3,580
4515	Concert Series	Three Year grant award FCM18.11.15.7. Final payment	£2,500
6010	Bar Purchases	Total budget used to cover numerous orders.	£15,000
6100	Utilities	Any invoices over £1,500	£15,000

14. AGAR END OF YEAR EXTERNAL AUDITORS REPORT

Resolved: The Audit report is received.

15. VIRTUAL VOLUNTEER NETWORK – SANDBACH

The Meeting Clerk briefly described the project to date and highlighted the community value of maintaining a volunteer scheme for Sandbach, which has helped so many during the recent pandemic and would provide a benefit for

future methods in supporting those in need.

Thanks were expressed to all involved with the creation and ongoing administration of the Sandbach Volunteer Co-ordination scheme.

Resolved: That Sandbach Town Council happy to continue as a Volunteer Co-ordination Point (VCP), to commit to the principles set out in the attached VCP Document and for the STC Co-ordinator to apply for a one-off grant on behalf of STC to support the scheme, in line with the VCP development principles.

16. QUALITY AWARD

Following report to previous meeting which confirmed, with regret, that Sandbach would need to delay its application for Quality Council award renewal for various reasons, the Operational Support Officer was pleased to confirm that Sandbach was now able to meet criteria and sought Member approval to swiftly progress the application.

Resolved: That:-

- i. Sandbach Town Council confirms that it either publishes all documents online or is in possession of documents which are not required for online publication.
- ii. Council delegates application submission to the Operational Support Officer, to be carried out as soon as possible.

17. HANGING BASKETS INVOICE

It was requested that an evaluation of effectiveness of the current hanging basket process is reviewed by the Assets and Services meeting, with ensuing report provided to a future Council meeting.

Resolved: That the payment of £4260.40 to pay invoice 531025912, raised for the 2020 hanging baskets scheme is approved and payment to be delegated to the Finance Officer. Payment to be made from budget line 110-4503.

18. TOWN HALL LIFT IMPROVEMENTS

Having reviewed the recommendations for works to the Town Hall lift and accompanying notes from the Facilities Supervisor, Members agreed the payment of specified lighting item and that query be raised of the contractor to establish compliance need for the remaining works.

Resolved: That:-

- i. Payment of the Car Lighting Upgrade at £1123.00 + VAT, is approved, with payment of the final invoice delegated to the Finance Officer and allocated to Cost Centre 180 6080 (Town Hall Maintenance)
- ii. Associated budget line overspend be noted.

19. STAFFING MATTERS

CONFIDENTIAL

Resolved: That:-

- i. Provision of three further external support sessions are approved to be taken by the named staff member, if needed.

- ii. The Personnel Working Group is asked to schedule its final meeting and close the group.

20. MEMBERS ITEM PROCEDURE

Referring to the draft document and circulated report, the Mayor stated that, if agreed by Members, the item would be passed to Finance, Policy and Governance to follow due process for policy review and discussion.

Resolved: the draft procedure and form be referred to the Finance, Police and Governance Committee.

21. CORRESPONDENCE

21.1 Cheshire Living Aids

Email received 5.11.2020 regarding shop unit rent.

Resolved: the letter be referred to Assets and Services Committee.

22. DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Town Council Meeting will be on Thursday 12th February 2021 at 7.00pm on Zoom. The room code will be shared on the agenda for the meeting.

Meeting closed 9.28pm

Cllr G Price Jones (Town Mayor)

KP