

SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Sandbach Town Council Meeting held on Thursday, 11 February 2021 at 7.00pm, via Zoom.

PRESENT

Councillors: G Price Jones
K Flavell
G Merry
I Williams
L Crane
S Crane
S Corcoran
D Jack
S Broad
K Seymour
R Hovey
A Smith
R Hoffmann
M Muldoon
D Hegarty
S Kirkham
S Ashcombe-Hurt

Also present were approximately 15 members of the public.
The Operational Support Officer managed Zoom.

A moment of reflection by Cllr Flavell.

Before the meeting the Mayor made the following statement:

As I open the meeting and in light of recent events, I would like to remind members of the Council and the Public, that I have the power to mute and / or remove from the meeting anyone who does not conform to general courtesy and good conduct; however I will always try to give a warning before exercising this power. Can I therefore ask that all statements are through the Chair.

Under the Standing Orders, I ask that we stick to the agenda and adhere to the rules of debate. We have, I understand, four members of the public who wish to speak, we will hear their comments, however we may not be able to respond. If not, a response will be forthcoming after the meeting, please ensure that the meeting Clerk has your contact details.

1.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs: J Beddows
M Lea-O'Mahoney
Absent without apologies: Cllr P Eaton

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Corcoran

Declared that he is the leader of Cheshire East Council and following items related to CEC: 9.3.4, 11 and 14.2.

Councillor advised that this declaration was made in the interest of openness and transparency and is considered a non-pecuniary interest.

Cllr L Crane

Advised that she is a Cabinet Member of CEC and has an interest in items 9.3.4, 11 and 14.2.

Cllr Flavell

Advised that she is a Cabinet Member of CEC and has an interest in items 9.3.4, 11 and 14.2.

Cllr Hovey

As a Trustee of Sandbach Concert Series an interest in item 10.1 was declared.

Cllr Merry

As a Trustee of Sandbach Concert Series and Foden's Band and interest in item 10.1 was declared.

3. **MAYORS COMMENTS**

The Mayor was pleased to see many in attendance for the meeting. He reflected on people's health and staying safe during the pandemic, stating that he has recently been personally affected by Covid-19.

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

The Mayor introduced speaker 1 and said that, whilst not wanting to predetermine a future planning application, he encouraged members of the public and Council to voice their opinions at a Planning Meeting taking place next Monday.

Speaker 1 spoke to a PowerPoint Presentation in relation to planning application No. 17/4838, which is for a development of houses on the Capricorn site. The proposed plan sees the diversion of Footpath 14, for which no diversion order has been lodged and the destruction of Filterbed Wood. The plan also proposes a changes to Old Mill Road, which it is felt would exacerbate traffic problems and air quality at the J16 bridge point. Speaker 1 suggested an alternative option, which might be considered.

Speaker 2

Requested an apology from Cllr Corcoran. He referred to page 18 of the Sandbach Chronicle and an item regarding Parking on the Pavement. He feels that he has been the target of 'intimidating tactics' when he parked his vehicle on the footpath outside his property. He referred to an associate of Cllr Corcoran who has also been observed parking on a footpath. Cllr Corcoran responded, saying that the two incidents were not alike.

Speaker 3

Questioned the parity between how staff and members of the public are treated by STC, with regard to email communication and referred to the Council's obligations to ensure that vulnerable people in the community feel safe. He asked what the Council is doing to engage in the 'Safer Communities' initiative, to protect vulnerable people who are becoming the victims of hate crime. The Mayor referred the speaker to Council policies on diversity and equality. Speaker 3 demanded that a 'Truth and Reconciliation' meeting be convened, whereby issues of discrimination are addressed.

Speaker 4

Queried a comment made at the Finance, Policy and Governance Committee on 4 February, when it was stated that costs relating to hanging baskets exceeded £4,000. She requested clarification. The Clerk advised that three invoices had been paid totalling £3,552 (exc VAT) and that with VAT the cost would be over £4,000. She also gave the totals spent on floral provision for 2018 and 2019.

Speaker 5

Speaker 5 expressed her concerns regarding the interaction and effects that a member of the Town Council is having on vulnerable people within the Community. She outlined her involvement with people with mental health difficulties both in her professional and private life, and summarised the serious effects and consequences that bullying and discriminatory attitudes can have on people with mental health issues. She went on to speak about the proposed Wellbeing Day and feels that a separate 'Wellness Day' has been hijacked.

She requested a response to two questions:

1. What plans are in place for the up and coming International Women's Day?
2. What plans are in place for the Wellness Day and how does this fit into the Partnership work?

Following questions the Town Mayor reconvened the Town Council Meeting.

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

There are none.

5. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 14 JANUARY 2021.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2021 are approved as an accurate record.

6. **TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE PLANNING & CONSULTATION COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD ON 11 AND 25 JANUARY 2021 (DRAFT).**

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Planning and Consultation Committee are noted.

7. **TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ASSETS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON 26 JANUARY 2021 (DRAFT).**

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Assets and Services Committee are noted.

8. **TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE EVENTS SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 27 JANUARY 2021 (DRAFT).**

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Events Sub-Committee are notes.

9. **MATTERS ARISING**

9.1 **Council (14.1.21)**

9.1.1 **Loan Repayment (PW502858)**

Lead: RFO

At the last meeting it was resolved that the smaller of the two PWLB loans should be settled using a surplus that had accumulated in reserves. At the time it was understood the balance was c£63k. The Acting RFO was asked to report the final settlement balance. Having received the final figure from PWLB a large 'premium' of £25,775.97 has been applied, which increases the final settlement sum to £89,776.61.

Council considered three options and subject to confirmation that no unrealistic premium is applied, that the sum of £63,080 is paid against the balance of the loan, thus reducing the balance.

RESOLVED: that subject to the above, £63,080 is paid against the balance of loan PW502858, from budget line 400-4629.

9.1.2 **Shop Unit Lease Review**

Lead: RFO

It was reported that due to staff absence and the Covid pandemic, that the shop rent reviews which were due in 2020 have not taken place. The Clerk has sought advice from the Council's legal advisor and subject to agreement with the lessees, a memorandum can be applied which will defer the review. The Clerk suggested that such a rent review is deferred to 2022, when it is hoped, business will be getting back to normal.

RESOLVED: that the absence of a lease review in 2020 is noted and that the rent review will be deferred until 2022 (post-Covid19), when businesses are able to trade normally.

There was discussion about the continuation of the 25% discount, however as some clarification was required, this has been deferred until further information is available.

9.2 Finance, Policy and Governance

9.2.1 Local Athlete Sponsorship

Lead: Chair of Finance, Policy & Governance

Sponsorship is sought for local snowboarder Mia Brookes. Mia lives in Sandbach and attends a Sandbach School, she has been selected to join Team GBs 'A' Team World Class Programme and is currently on a programme to represent GB at the 2026 Winter Olympics.

The FPG has recommended that Council awards £1000 to Mia under the General Power of Competence and asks that consideration is given to sponsorship on an annual basis.

RESOLVED: that the general Power of Competence is exercised to sponsor Mia Brookes £1000. Payment to be allocated to budget line 110 4550.

Future applications will be considered following receipt of a request from Mia's parent/guardian.

9.2.2 Equality Policy

Lead: Chair of Finance, Policy & Governance

This policy has been considered by the F,P&G Committee, however due to requiring some amendments, had been withdrawn. The Chair outlined proposed changes.

9.2.3 Cash Handling Policy

Lead: Chair of Finance, Policy & Governance

RESOLVED: That the amended Cash Handling Policy is adopted for immediate use.

9.2.4 COVID Policy

Lead: Chair of Finance, Policy & Governance

RESOLVED: that the Covid-19 Policy is adopted for immediate use.

9.2.5 Members Project Plan

Lead: Chair of Finance, Policy & Governance

The Members' Item Policy has been presented to Council previously and deferred to FP&G for final review. A supporting document 'Project Plan' has been developed, which will be used to support Members' Items. Both documents were presented for adoption.

RESOLVED: that the Members' Item Policy and Project Plan are adopted for immediate use.

9.2.6 Aged Debt

RESOLVED: that the Council will write off £962.97 of uncollectable debt and notes the accounting corrections to the value of £1,192.49.

9.3 Assets and Services Committee

Lead: Chair of Assets and Services

9.3.1 Christmas Lights 2021

Council is recommended by A&S Committee to make available the Christmas Lights Budget of £26,500 for the 2021 Christmas Light installation and event.

The cost of the switch on event was confirmed to be in the region of £2,000.

It was noted that a meeting with a potential lighting provider is being organised, to which members will be invited.

RESOLVED: that a budget of £26,500 is made available for the 2021 Christmas Lights, which will be delivered by the Town Clerk's Office in consultation with the Chair of Assets and Services.

9.3.2 Christmas Market 2021

Council is recommended to make available £10,000 for the purpose of delivering the 2021 Christmas Market. It is proposed that the 2021 market is supported operationally by an external body. Members are keen to see the Christmas Market continue as a community focussed event, with the ethos 'Home Grown, Home Made'.

RESOLVED: that funding of £10,000 is made available:

Budget	£5,000
Rental inc.	£4,000c
Gen Res	£1,000c (this amount is calculated on assumed rental income being £4,000).

For the delivery of the 2021 Christmas Market. Delivery is delegated to the Town Clerk's office in consultation with the Chair of A&S.

9.3.3 Living Aids

Following the recent A&S meeting, the Clerk was asked to seek further information to support a request that rent be waived as Living Aids had been unable to trade throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Information was supplied which confirmed:

- There is no business interruption insurance.
- CEC Grant of £10,000 has been claimed, but only just covers overheads.
- Whilst Living Aids might be classed as an 'essential' business, the owners feel the risk to customers is too great to trade.

Members discussed the current 25% discount which has been applied to all units.

RESOLVED: that Living Aids be awarded an additional 25% for periods when the business is unable to trade due to Covid-19 restrictions. This additional discount is to be back-dated to the beginning of the current Lockdown.

9.3.4 Hanging Baskets 2021

Plans for 2021 have been agreed with the A&S Committee. Due to need to place an order, it has been agreed that the provision will be fulfilled by ANSA during 2021, with alternative options being considered for 2022.

RESOLVED:

That:

- i. The update is received on the current 2021 status.
- ii. An additional £2,000 over approved budget is made available for the purpose of delivering the floral provision and making safe the infrastructure. This will be recorded as over-spend against budget.
- iii. The 2021 provision to be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair of A&S.
- iv.

10. FINANCE MATTERS

Lead: Chair of Finance, Policy & Governance

10.1 Annual Grants

RESOLVED: that

- i. the award of annual grants is noted, in accordance with budget provision 2021/22 as delegated to the Finance Officer.
- ii. the payment of annual sponsorship to Foden's Band is approved, in accordance with budget provision 2021/22 - £7,500.

10.2 Invoices

10.2.1 E Smith

RESOLVED: that the payment of £1,458.30 is approved, as the final balance for works to the Town Hall Office. To be allocated to Budget Line Committed Reserves 346. This balance has been held on retention for 12 months.

10.2.2 David Trowler Associates

RESOLVED: that

- i. the payment of £200 + VAT is approved, as the balance outstanding against design work undertaken for Town Hall Office Refurb. Payment to be allocated to Committed Reserves 346.
- ii. the payment of £500 + VAT is approved, for additional design work undertaken on the new office accommodation project, to be funded via budget line Committed Reserves 347.

10.2.3 New Hall Property Ltd T/A Signature Floors

RESOLVED: that the payment of £3268.60 + VAT is approved. Payment to be delegated to the Finance Officer and allocated to budget line 180 4670 (Approved Purchases).

10.3 Income related to COVID (Discretionary payment)

Lead: The Clerk

The Council has successfully obtained grant support of £25,000 to assist with costs related to Covid-19. To date the Council has incurred expenditure totalling £10,299.60 on items such as PPE and door control. Members are asked to off-set this amount against the grant and then to allocate the surplus against Covid Code 6091.

It was suggested that the surplus is used against losses incurred by the Town Hall due to closure; the Clerk would need to check any grant clauses to establish this is permissible.

RESOLVED: that £10,299.60 spend be off-set against the grant income and that subject to compliance to the grant conditions, the surplus be put against Town Hall income losses.

10.4 Irrecoverable VAT

Lead: The Clerk

The purpose of presenting this item is to draw attention to the amount of irrecoverable VAT generated during the last quarter. The reason for this is due to the payment of works relating to roof repairs against large capital expenditure at a time when Vat generated through income is extremely low. Council is asked to note.

RESOLVED: that overspend on budget line 180 635 (Irrecoverable VAT) is noted.

11. SANDBACH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Lead: The Mayor and Cllr Kirkham

A detailed progress report was presented by the Mayor and Cllr Kirkham.

Sandbach NDP was adopted in 2016 before the CEC Local Plan; there is now need to review the NDP and align it with the now adopted CEC Local Plan.

The review phases are:

Phase 1 – Minor non-material changes

Phase 2 – Material changes that will not change the nature of the plan

Phase 3 – Material changes that will change the nature of the plan.

CEC Officer Tom Evans, as well as CCA Officers have supported the review work.

There are an addition two documents that the Council needs to consider as it modifies its plan:

The forthcoming CEC SAPDP and a Government White Paper on Planning.

It is felt that Sandbach does not require a Housing Needs Analysis Survey, as the area currently falls just 50 properties short of its 2030 target.

Thanks were paid to the community volunteers, who have undertaken a great deal of work on the plan and its revision.

The timetable for modifications will see phase 2 being passed to the inspectors around September 2021, therefore it is expected that the submission will be finalised in May/June this year.

An appendix to the ALS is being created, which is a list of 'notable properties', this will contain details of area, architectural design etc.

Members of the Council and public are invited to submit details of buildings or areas that they feel are of architectural significance. These do not necessarily have to be conservation buildings, but notable buildings that influence the nature of the built environment. Ultimately this could form the basis of a development control document, which could be used to influence developers.

All member are urged to submit their comments.

RESOLVED: that

- i. the update on the progress of the NDP refresh is received.
- ii. Councillor Volunteers are encouraged to help the NDP WG produce a list of Historical and Architectural buildings, complete with images, in Sandbach.

12. ANNUAL MEETING 2021

Nominations for Mayor and Deputy Mayor 2021/22

Members were reminded that there remains just one Council meeting before the AGM in May. They were asked to consider the position of Mayor and Deputy Mayor ahead of the April Council meeting and to decide if the Mayor and Deputy Mayor positions should be resolved before the AGM, with the AGM being a Mayor Making event.

Calendar of Meetings 2021/22

A draft calendar of meetings has been circulated, members are asked to review and let the Operation Support Officer have comments in good time for the document to be presented for adoption in April.

RESOLVED: that the position is noted.

13. MEMBERS ITEMS

There were no members items.

14. CORRESPONDENCE

14.1 Sandbach Partnership

Correspondence received on the 1st February 2021 concerning a New Sandbach Partnership Chairman.

The Clerk reported that she has spoken to Keeley Todd, the proposed new Chair of the Partnership. Keeley is keen to review the SLA and work with the Council.

It was noted that there has been no payment made to the Partnership during the current financial year, however there may be a requirement for a payment to be made to cover some 2020/21 running costs. As there is no Council meeting due before the end of the financial year, the Clerk suggested that members might consider committing some of the current year budget to 2021/22.

RESOLVED: that the letter is received and that Council should make available a sum of money to be paid early in the Financial Year 2021/22, subject to an agreeable SLA and sight of the accounts.

14.2 Cheshire East Council

Correspondence received on the 3rd February 2021 concerning New Homes Bonus.

RESOLVED: that the letter is received.

15. DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Town Council Meeting will be on Thursday 8th April 2021 at 7.00pm on Zoom. The room code will be shared on the agenda for the meeting.

Meeting closed 9.11pm
Cllr G Price Jones (Town Mayor)
ALB

DRAFT