

SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Sandbach Town Council Meeting held on Thursday, 4 March 2021 at 6.15pm, via Zoom.

PRESENT Councillors: K Flavell (Deputy Mayor, in the Chair)
 G Merry
 Cllr P Eaton
 I Williams
 S Corcoran
 K Seymour
 R Hovey
 A Smith
 R Hoffmann
 M Muldoon

Also present were 2 members of the public.
The Operational Support Officer managed Zoom.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs: G Price Jones
 L Crane
 S Crane
 D Hegarty
 J Beddows
 M Lea
 S Kirkham

Absent without apologies: D Jack, S Broad, S Ashcombe-Hurt

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Corcoran

Declared that in the interest of openness and transparency, he is the leader of Cheshire East Council.

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

None.

4. MARKET HALL SHOP UNIT RENTS CONCESSION

Lead: Chair of Finance, Policy and Governance

In September 2020, the Council resolved that a 25% discount be applied to the rent of the Market Hall shop units for the period of lockdown from 22nd March to 17th June 2020. When further debated in future meetings, it became clear that this should apply to both periods of lockdown. The Clerk asked Council to confirm its intention that the 25% discount also applied to the most recent lockdown period from November 2020.

The Clerk also provided clarity to members, that the recently resolved additional 25% discount for Living Aids, was in addition to the 25% lockdown concession applied to all four shops. Therefore subject to confirmation, Living Aids will be in receipt of a total 50% discount. Refer to resolution STC11.2.21 (9.3.3).

RESOLVED: That the 25% discount is applied to all for Market Shop units for the entire period of restrictions to non-essential trading.

5. LOAN REPAYMENT

Lead: Chair of Finance, Policy and Governance

At the 11th February Council Meeting, Members voted to pay £63,080 against one of the Loan balances; subject to confirmation that no additional premium had to be paid. It has since been confirmed with the PWLB that a premium of £16,253.30 would be due for a partial settlement of £63,144.32. Should the Council then continue with monthly payments for the duration of the loan, the amount that will be saved is £3,807.67.

The Finance Policy and Governance Chair believed that 2 main options available to Cllrs are:

- i. Pay the Loan off with the saving as above, although this would not be compliant with the resolution made by Council on 11th February, as extra fees are being paid.
- ii. No repayment of Loan in full or in part during 2021-22, and to determine in the 2022 budget setting process whether the loan should be paid in full, with provision made for the 63,080 to be returned to general reserves.

For either option, standing orders need to be suspended, due a change in a resolution less than 6 months old.

It was suggested that the £63,030 should be returned to general reserves, and be used as a reduction in the following years precept, with savings passed onto taxpayers. The money has come from the residents and should be returned to the residents without being spent on other things. It was felt a saving £3807.67 is not a good saving over 18.5 years and that the money can be better spent elsewhere.

Members agreed that the issues Council have encountered with the PWLB should be highlighted to other Councils at the ChALC AGM to see if there are other Councils in the same position, and whether anything can be done.

RESOLVED: That: Standing Order 7 be suspended.

RESOLVED: That the £63,030 is put in an earmarked reserve and then used to reduce the following year's precept by that amount below a balanced budget.

6. 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 6.46pm
Cllr K Flavell (Deputy Town Mayor)
MW

DRAFT