

# SANDBACH ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2021

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Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Thursday 18 March 2021 at 7.00pm on Zoom.

## 1. **Welcome by Town Mayor**

Councillor Geraint Price Jones welcomed everyone to the Town Meeting and gave thanks to Key Works and the Community for the fantastic response during COVID. He noted that this meeting is an ideal time to showcase the fantastic work of local community groups, and has hope that as the summer progresses, local events and work can start to return to normality. Sandbach has also lost some key members of the Community during COVID, such as Reg Dunning who will be sadly missed.

## 2. **Minutes of the 2019 Annual Meeting.**

The minutes were deferred until the next Annual Town Meeting as they were not available at this meeting.

## 3. **Community Group Presentations:**

### i. **Sandbach Footpath Group**

The Chairman of the group informed the meeting that there are only 20 Rights of Way in Sandbach Parish that go somewhere (Not a dead end or ending on a busy/dangerous road). Three of these footpaths are on the Houndings Site and are all threatened by developments. House developments have been built over Footpath 14 that runs through the Persimmon Site.

Funding has been awarded to Sandbach Footpath Group for 60 kissing gates through the New Homes Bonus Community fund. The gates are safer, and easier to use and last 30 years as opposed to Wooden stiles that last 5-10 years. The Kissing Gate project is now almost complete.

The Chairman of the Group was pleased to announce that the Walking festival will take place again in 2021 from 26<sup>th</sup> June-4<sup>th</sup> July. There will be 9 days of local fun walks including a treasure hunt and everyone is welcome.

### ii. **Sandbach Partnership**

The new Chair of the Partnership introduced herself and noted that Dot and Sue have now left the Partnership, having both been involved for a long time. Dot and Sue were thanked on behalf of Sandbach for all their hard work.

Being three days into the role, much time so far has been taken up by admin and making lots of new introductions, but work has begun on the online and social media presence of the Partnership, along with Event Planning and funding and volunteer training.

It is hoped that Forum group can be revitalized following Covid, and also that a Youth Forum group can be introduced. The Partnership would also like to introduce a local directory that people can use if they would like to get involved with Community Groups/Activities.

Following the first management meeting, the Partnership have decided to focus on 2 events for 2020 – Spooky Saturday and the Tree of Light, which will be especially poignant following COVID.

In 2022 – The Partnership are hoping to launch a Community Feedback Process where residents can suggest projects and events that they would like the Partnership

to undertake. More info for this will follow.  
The Community were thanked for their warm welcome.

iii. **Dementia Friendly Sandbach**

A representative of the group informed the meeting that Dementia Friendly Sandbach was setup through the Partnership in 2018. From 2019 it became a self-sustaining community group. In July of 2019, Sandbach was registered as aspiring to become a dementia friendly community. The Group's logo was designed by a Sandbach High School student.

Pre-lockdown, the group had been involved in a number of events including: A Christmas Event, a monthly dementia friendly coffee morning and a host of other activities including a dementia friendly walk as part of the Sandbach Walking Festival. The group has helped create 28 Dementia Friends at Sandbach High School that includes staff and pupils. Similar sessions have since been run at Elworth hall Primary School, Haslington Primary School and with Sandbach Town Council staff.

During Lockdown, local residents have been kept in touch with by phone ensuring that they are getting the support that they need. Online sessions have also taken place including a weekly "Singing for the Brain" session and weekly Zoom coffee mornings. Coming out of lockdown, the group hope to hold face to face events and social activities which are really important. Also, they would like to start an initiative when possible that recognizes dementia friendly shops in Sandbach.

Contact details were shared, and the representative asked anyone who knows someone struggling with their memory to please encourage them to go to their GP and get it checked out. Attendees were also informed that Dementia wrist bands are available and to please shop in local Dementia Friendly shops if you can.

iv. **Sandbach Arts Room**

The Chair of Sandbach Arts Room introduced herself and explained that the Sandbach Arts Room have now moved premises to the old RBS bank which has been amazing for the group. It could not have functioned in the old premises during COVID. The group have tried to keep open whenever possible, and hold around 18 2 hour sessions per week. Approximately 110 people access the service through the week pre COVID. Some sessions were started online. In cases of face to face sessions, the number of classes were reduced and unfortunately the number of people able to access classes reduced in order to carry classes out online which everybody found hard.

Worries were shared that COVID have made people become introverted, and soon people would have to become "Comfortable with being uncomfortable" when they leave the house more often and return to physical workplaces etc.

Being online has given some people the chance to speak up, as the sessions are longer – the sessions are left open after they have officially finished for people to speak afterwards. WhatsApp groups were set up for some of the classes so they could communicate and get feedback on work etc. outside of sessions.

Looking to the future, the group are looking at what do people want? Do we go back to sessions as pre COVID or have hybrid sessions. A survey is now been carried out with those involved to ascertain the best route forward.

All members of the public were welcomed to the Arts Room should they need support.

#### **4. Sandbach Small Common**

Cllr Donal Hegarty explained that the Town Council has committed to ensuring that the infrastructure of this Town remains attractive to residents, shoppers and Businesses. One of the ways that STC plan to do this is through the Small Common Refurbishment. The Small Common is currently a 20 space car park that is periodically used for markets and events. The Town Council has set up a Sub-Committee to examine options to refurbish the Small Common Car Park. A brief has been developed which was around resurfacing the area and improving the area with trees and plants. A second option included lightweight canopy structures over the car park to be used for events and the enhance the market in the future. A consultant has been appointed to take this brief on and develop it. A consultation with Market Traders, Business and residents will be undertaken including the options in the near future.

#### **5. Sandbach Neighborhood Plan**

Cllr Steve Kirkham noted that whilst Neighbourhood Planning is not a legal requirement, it helps communities shape the area they live in through the use of Policies. The Sandbach Neighbourhood Development plan was officially adopted in March 2016. It has since been used successfully to protect the identity of the 5 villages that make up the Parish of Sandbach, along with local Biodiversity. It was one of the first Neighbourhood Plans in CEC to be adopted.

One of the key functions of the Sandbach Neighbourhood Plan Working group is to monitor changes in National Policy and local policy, and to refresh the plan if needed to ensure that the Sandbach Neighbourhood Plan remains relevant and up to date.

Following guidance, the group are now looking to refresh the Plan and hope to have completed the process by the end of September 2021. The process will include external examination and public consultation prior to being completed.

If anyone would like to get involved with the Working Group, they were invited to get in touch with Cllr Kirkham at his Council email address.

#### **6. Presentation Questions**

There were none.

#### **7. Have Your Say!**

A resident asked if anyone would be able to explain how the new Spine Road for the Capricorn site is going to work. Cllr Hovey noted that one of the recent plans put before Sandbach Town Council Planning Committee still showed a bridge being required to cross the Arclid Brook. The Council are against that and have suggested that any access needs to be from the J17 access point to avoid cutting through the Wildlife Corridor.

The Town Mayor thanked all for attending.

Meeting ended 8.35pm  
G Price Jones, Town Mayor.

MW