



## **SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

Minutes for the meeting held on Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at 7.00pm in Sandbach Town Hall.

**Present** Councillors: J Arnold, N Cook, S Corcoran, L Crane (Chair), K England, K Flavell, R Gray, D Hegarty, M Hough, G Lindop, L MacGregor, M Mitchell, M Muldoon, A Nevitt (vice Chair), D Poole, S Richards, T Wheatcroft

### **PART 1 : ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllrs G Price Jones, M Deakin, S Broad and J Beddows.

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Prejudicial interest declared by Cllr S Corcoran for item 14, who withdrew from the room for this item. Non prejudicial interest declared by L Crane and M Muldoon for items relating to Cheshire East.

#### **3. MAYOR'S COMMENTS**

The Mayor had attended all local civic services except Alsager. She was in full costume at the Council's own Town Festival which she felt had been a major success with great attendance, excellent feedback and good weather.

The Mayor took the opportunity to announce her forthcoming civic awards event to be held on 6 October for which she is inviting nominations to recognise and celebrate the vast array of volunteer effort in Sandbach.

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### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

The Mayor adjourned the meeting to allow questions from members of the public relating to items on this agenda.

Mr M Benson spoke to item 15, on behalf of the Friends of Sandbach Park Group, stating that the group were concerned that Sandbach Park was not large enough to provide a skate park facility and this may adversely affect the park experience. He provided the scale of other larger parks which incorporated these facilities.

Mr P Jennings spoke to item 15 and expressed frustration that a skate park had not been provided in Sandbach in line with other local areas, He referenced Nantwich who had recently opened a skate park assisted by Cheshire East and wondered why Sandbach was experiencing barriers to progress. He felt a further consultation was unnecessary.

Mrs J Woolliscroft, Director of Hope St Social CIC, spoke to item 13 in support of her grant application and answered a number of questions.

The Mayor thanked the public for their contributions and reconvened the Town Council Meeting.

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**4. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 14 JUNE 2023 [ATTACHED].**

**Resolved:** The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

**5. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING, CONSULTATION & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEES HELD ON 3 JULY, 31 JULY 2023 (DRAFT) and 29 AUGUST (DRAFT).**

**Resolved:** The minutes were noted.

**6. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ASSETS & SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON 19<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2023 (DRAFT).**

**Resolved:** The minutes were noted.

**7. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE HELD ON 8 AUGUST 2023 (DRAFT).**

**Resolved:** The minutes were noted.

**8. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF COMMUNITY & EVENTS COMMITTEE HELD ON 23<sup>RD</sup> AUGUST 2023 (DRAFT).**

**Resolved:** The minutes were noted.

**9. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE APPEALS COMMITTEE HELD ON 5<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2023 (DRAFT).**

The minutes were not produced by the time of the meeting.

**10. MATTERS ARISING FROM COMMITTEE MEETINGS:**

**10.1 Assets & Services Committee**

**Ratification of Fees & Charges Review**

[Attached: Market Rent Review Summary]

Lead: Assets & Services Committee Chair

**Resolved:** *the revised fees & charges were ratified following recommendation from the Committee at its meeting 19<sup>th</sup> July 2023, and further research, wef 1 October 2023*

## **10.2 Community & Events Committee**

### **Festival of Light Event**

Lead: Community & Events Committee Chair

Cllr Cook proposed that, following concerns regarding adequate management resources in the short to medium term this event should be deferred to January 2025.

**Resolved:** *Following recommendation from the Committee at its meeting 23rd August to consider and approve the planning and delivery of a Festival of Light event in January 2024, subject to resources, it was approved that this event should be deferred to January 2025.*

## **10.3 Planning, Consultation & Environment Committee**

### **Public Consultation ref Car Parking Charges**

[Attached: CEC Consultation Document]

Lead: Planning, Consultation & Environment Committee Chair

It was noted that the CEC proposals and consultation was still awaited and that this was likely to be issued imminently. Council acknowledged that this was a matter of significant public interest and that arrangements should be made to respond appropriately and within the new deadlines. Cllr Corcoran made a proposal that the Town Council should make enquiries regarding the transfer of CEC owned car parks in anticipation of the proposals.

**Resolved:**

- i) *That a working group be formed when consultation details are available and that authority delegated to the Chief Officer in consultation with that working group to submit a response to any formal consultation on car parking charges in Sandbach.*
- ii) *That STC asks, via the Chief Officer, CEC for information regarding the cost of asset transfer of the car parks, broken down by car park.*

## **11. COMMITTEE TERMS OR REFERENCE**

[Attached: Draft Committee Terms of Reference – previously circulated]

Lead: Mayor

**Resolved:** *the revised terms of reference incorporating comments from each Committee are approved for the current Council term, subject to any specific proposals to amend during that period.*

## **12. ADOPTION OF CEC CODE OF CONDUCT**

[Attached: CEC Code of Conduct – previously circulated]

Lead: Mayor

**Resolved:** *The updated CEC version of the Code of Conduct was adopted in full.*

## **13. GRANT APPLICATION (Hope St £5,088 and Tree of Light £1,500)**

[Attached: Grant Applications received;

13a Hope Street Social CIC – requested amount £5,088;

13b Friends of Sandbach Cemetery - requested amount £1,500]

Lead: Mayor

Members expressed support of the Hope St application but felt it did not meet the criteria sufficiently in respect of Sandbach residents.

Cllr Nevitt was asked to declare a prejudicial interest in the Tree of Light Application and abstained from the vote but not the debate. It was noted that this grant had been awarded last year and then refunded following successful fund raising. A concern was raised about the quality of the bid. Broad support was expressed to support the event and provide the funding in the hope that some of it would be refunded based on last year's experience.

**Resolved:**

- i) *the Grant Application of £5,088 for Hope St Social CIC was rejected.*
- ii) *the Grant Application of £1,500 for the Tree of Light event, from budget code 4530 110, balance remaining £22,011 was approved.*

**14. CEC LIBRARY PROVISION TOP UP REQUEST**

[Attached: Chief Officer Report / CEC proposal circulated to members]

Lead: Mayor

Cllr Corcoran left the room for the debate and the vote.

There was considerable debate on this item. The Chair of PCE committee had provided context in his absence from his meeting with CEC. Some members felt that it was appropriate to fund the top up due to the community benefit of remaining open on Thursday afternoon. It was noted that the CEC data indicated Thursday afternoon was the quietest period hence that being selected for closure. The majority felt that the fact that the Library would remain open on all existing operating days but for shorter hours was acceptable.

**Resolved:** *[Named vote] that a top up fund of £17,000, to maintain the Sandbach Library service on Thursday afternoon, in the context of the impact on the Town Council's 2024-25 budget and precept, would not be provided.*

**15. SKATE PARK UPDATE & NEXT STEPS**

[Attached: Skate Park Working Group Meeting Note / Chief Officer Report / Groundwork proposal circulated to members / ]

Lead: Mayor

There was considerable debate on this item which acknowledged the public comments made. There were mixed views about the suitability of the park for skate / bike facilities due to the size / profile of the park. The Chief Officer had confirmed that CEC had advised that there were no suitable Council owned alternatives and it was felt that exploration of other sites was no longer productive or helpful. The Chief Officer also provided details from the recent Nantwich skate park installation which provided some useful pointers with regard to the role of CEC and funding sources. Cllr Corcoran urged no further prevarication on this matter and to give a clear steer. He provided the proposal which was seconded and upheld in a named vote.

In addition, members strongly supported the notion of meaningful engagement of young people and requested that this was explored further through the Community and Events Committee.

**Resolved:** *i) [Named vote] to support the location of a Skate Park facility in Sandbach Park, and to delegate authority to the Chief Officer to determine the next steps in consultation with CEC;*

*To support the further exploration of commissioned engagement for young people's provision in Sandbach, to the Chief Officer in consultation with Community and Events Committee.*

## **16. COMMUNITY RESILIENCE RESPONSE WORKING GROUP**

[Attached: Notes of the Working Group 22.8.23]

Lead: Mayor

**Resolved:** *The progress of the Community Resilience Response Working Group was noted*

## **17. SMALL COMMON REFURBISHMENT SUMMARY POSITION**

[Attached: report of the Chair of the Small Common Sub Committee]

Lead: Chair of the Small Common Sub Committee

The Mayor thanked Cllr Hegarty for his significant contribution to the delivery of this project on time and within budget.

**Resolved:** *The summary position of this capital project was noted.*

## **18. MEMBERS ITEM - CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE & EVENT**

[Attached: Members item form and update]

Lead: Cllr T Wheatcroft, Climate Change Lead

Cllr Wheatcroft summarised the work he had undertaken to date in his role as Climate Change lead and outlined plans for an upcoming event to be held in the Town Hall. Cllr Corcoran felt that free use of the Hall would need careful consideration if it were to imply support for specific suppliers. Overall the notion of an event was supported but Council felt that further details would be needed before approval.

**Resolved:** *The update was noted and authority for the free use of the Town Hall for a Climate Change promotion event was delegated to the next Planning, Consultation & Environment Committee.*

## **19. SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL CORPORATE STRATEGY NEXT STEPS**

Lead: Mayor

**Resolved:** *the setting up of a Task & Finish Group to consider all Committee feedback and produce an updated action plan to deliver the strategy was approved.*

## **20. SANDBACH CHRISTMAS MARKET**

[Attached: Chief Officer Report]

Lead: Chief Officer

The Chief Officer highlighted that the additional expenditure was £340 not £3,400 due to an administrative error on her part. She also noted that the budget was

historically incorrect and would be addressed as part of the budget setting process. Council reflected on the significance and success of the Christmas Market and supported the necessary resources.

**Resolved:**

- i) *The payment of the invoice of £10,025 for Christmas market infrastructure against budget code 140 / 6352 was approved.*
- ii) *the additional expenditure of £340 for barrier set up and collection was approved.*
- iii) *the use of underspent budget and / or reserves for the cost over budget, and incorporate the longer term implications within the Council's budget setting exercise, was approved.*

## **21. FINANCE MATTERS**

[Attached: First Quarter budget statement and variance analysis]

Lead: Chief Officer

**Resolved:** *The first quarter budget statement and variance analysis were approved.*

## **22. CORRESPONDENCE**

### **22.1 Memorial request for help**

[Attached: Correspondence received from Mrs Gatley]

Lead: Mayor

Cllr Cook updated Council on the regulations regarding memorials and proposed that a memorial be placed on a bench adjacent to the Sandbach Cenotaph, as a fitting tribute for which there was precedent. She confirmed that she had discussed this with Mrs Gatley and the Sandbach Partnership who were in agreement. Council unanimously supported this proposal and thanked Cllr Cook for her work on this.

**Resolved:** *the placing of a memorial plaque on a bench adjacent to the Sandbach Cenotaph is supported.*

### **22.2 Town Council Representation Request for Sandbach Pantry**

[Attached: Correspondence received from Ian Parsons on behalf of Sandbach Pantry]

Lead: Mayor

**Resolved:**

- i) *representation on Sandbach Pantry Management Team is approved;*
- ii) *Cllr Ann Nevitt as the Council's representative on the Sandbach Pantry is approved.*

## **23. ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

- i) *Cobbles entertainment licence & Notice Board potential transfer to STC;*
- ii) *Policy Review Cycle;*
- iii) *Budget.*

## **24. DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next Town Council Meeting is the taking place on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023 at 7pm in Sandbach Town Hall (informal meeting 8 November 2023 to consider 2024-25 budget proposals)

**25. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**Resolved:** *that items under the Public Bodies (admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and accredited representatives of newspaper be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 was approved.*

**PART 2 : ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**26. STAFFING UPDATE**

To receive a verbal update.

Lead: Chief Officer

**Resolved:** *A verbal update regarding the implications of the current staff absence and approve necessary action was received and necessary action with regard to current staff absence was approved.*

**27. GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

To receive a verbal update to consider appropriate governance arrangements within the Council.

Lead: Mayor

**Resolved:** *This item was deferred to the next Full Council Meeting.*

**28. CHIEF OFFICER & RESPONSIBLE FINANCE OFFICER POST**

To consider the recommendation of the Chief Officer regarding this post.

Lead: Mayor

**Resolved:**

- i) actions in breach of the Member / Councillor Protocol were agreed;*
- ii) considerations regarding the Chief Officer post were delegated to the next Personnel Committee.*

*Meeting Closed 21.50 (Council resolved extension to meeting duration)*

*Cllr Laura Crane Mayor / Chair*

*CL*