



## SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Minutes for the meeting held on Wednesday, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023 at 7.00pm in Sandbach Town Hall.

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

### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr G Price Jones, S Richards, G Lindop and J Beddows. Cllr S Broad was absent without apology.

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

CEC Councillors S Corcoran, L Crane and M Muldoon declared a general non-pecuniary and non-prejudicial interest.

### 3. MAYOR'S COMMENTS

The Mayor warmly welcomed the significant number of visitors to the Council meeting. She provided an update on her Mayoral activities this quarter which amounted to over 50 events. The Mayor highlighted the Remembrance parade, which was so well attended by the town, and noted the dedication to Jordan Gatley now added as a permanent memorial. She highlighted the inaugural Civic Awards Event for Volunteers, the installation of the first of the defibrillators for each ward, the Town Council's successful Light Switch On Event, the fabulous Xmas Market also organised and delivered by STC, which, she said, was the envy of many towns. Finally, she noted that Sandbach's own Foden's was now formally recognised as the best band in the World!

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### PUBLIC QUESTIONS

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

The Mayor apologised for the poorly working Mic system which is in the process of being replaced when an effective value for money alternative is sourced.

A member of the Sandbach Youth Council asked the Council to fully support item 14 on Youth Provision and said that it was excellent to see that the Town Council is considering more support to young people in Sandbach.

Mrs. Cathy Bruderer spoke to item 12 to ask the Council to agree the proposed budget in relation to potential green space provision. She also wanted to return to the debate at the recent FPG Committee and that she disagreed with Cllr Corcoran's reasoning for the fallen amendment he raised. She also wanted to inform the Council that she felt sick about the proposed increased level of Mayoral allowance by £500 to £2,500 per annum and required evidence of the costs incurred. The Mayor asked for these points to be addressed under the debate for each item. After the questions the Town Mayor reconvened the Town Council Meeting.

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#### **4. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**Lead: Chair**

**Resolved :** *Under the Public Bodies (admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and accredited representatives of newspaper be excluded from the meeting for items 11.1 and 18 of business on this Agenda 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.*

#### **5. THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 13 SEPTEMBER 2023**

**Resolved:** *the minutes were agreed as an accurate record.*

#### **6. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING, CONSULTATION & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEES HELD ON 20 NOVEMBER 2023 (DRAFT).**

**Resolved:** *the draft minutes of the meeting were noted.*

#### **7. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE HELD ON 25 OCTOBER 2023 (DRAFT).**

**Resolved:** *the draft minutes of the meeting were noted.*

#### **8. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF COMMUNITY & EVENTS COMMITTEE HELD ON 1 NOVEMBER 2023 (DRAFT)**

**Resolved:** *the draft minutes of the meeting were noted.*

#### **9. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ASSETS & SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON 18<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2023 (DRAFT)**

**Resolved:** *the draft minutes of the meeting were noted.*

#### **10. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE, POLICY & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 22<sup>ND</sup> NOVEMBER 2023 (DRAFT)**

**Resolved:** *the draft minutes of the meeting were noted.*

#### **11. MATTERS ARISING FROM COMMITTEE MEETINGS:**

**11.1 Personnel Committee 25 October 2023 [considered under PART 2 of the Agenda]**

Chief Officer & Responsible Finance Officer Arrangements

Lead: Personnel Committee Chair

**Resolved:** *Following recommendation from the Committee at its meeting on 25 October 2023, Council approved arrangements with regard to the Chief Officer role and extended the existing fixed term contract by 12 months and a further 12 months by mutual agreement.*

**11.2 Assets & Services Committee 18 November 2023**

[Attached: CEC CCTV contract offer letter; Refer to relevant A&S Meeting Agenda pack items and Minutes]

Lead: Assets & Services Committee Chair

**Resolved:** *Following recommendations from the Committee at its meeting on 18 November 2023, Council approved the following:*

- i) The opening of the Indoor Market Hall on Tuesdays and Wednesdays for a trial period wef 1 January 2024;*
- ii) A '4 for 3 weeks new starter trader offer' for the first 2 months of trading is approved;*
- iii) The Town Hall community hire rate is reduced to 50% for Monday to Friday daytime bookings;*
- iv) the rental of Council land to traders is prevented except Friday and Saturday evenings and under the current market charter arrangements;*
- v) A CCTV 3 year fixed price contract with CEC;*
- vi) The exploration of ownership and maintenance of Sandbach town street furniture;*
- vii) Acceptance of responsibility for maintenance of a bench on The Hill outside Griffiths & Booth Funeral Directors;*
- viii) That the Ranger Service Review favoured the commissioning of a Ranger Service from ANSA and that provision for this would be considered as part of the budget setting process.*

**11.3 Finance, Policy & Governance Committee 22 November 2023  
Policy Review / Sponsorship Policy**

[Attached: Policy Review Timetable / Draft Sponsorship Policy]

Lead: Finance, Policy & Governance Committee Chair

A discussion was held regarding the Council's grant policy with a request from the diversity lead that the diversity reference should be strengthened. It was clearly stated by the Mayor and Chief Officer that the Council is committed to equality and diversity in all its policies and where necessary this will be re-emphasised.

**Resolved:** *Following recommendation from the Committee at its meeting on 22 November 2023, Council approved the following:*

- i) To review all Council policies once every 4 years;*
- ii) The indicative policy review timetable;*

iii) *The Sponsorship Policy updated for specific criteria.*

## **12. 2024-25 BUDGET & RESERVES**

[Attached: Chief Officer Budget Report / Proposed Budget / Proposed Use of Reserves / 2023-24 Outturn Report]

Lead: Mayor / Finance, Policy & Governance Chair

Cllr Wheatcroft made a request for Council to consider a £500 increase in the budget to accommodate an initiative by Audlem Town Council for all town and parish councils to jointly fund a legal case against CEC in respect of its current parking review. The Chief Officer noted that such a cost if incurred could be afforded within the draft budget as it contains a general provision for legal costs of £1,500 pa. The Chief Officer asked that more consideration of the legal implications of this request was required before a Council could make an informed decision and Cllr Wheatcroft agreed to provide those details in due course.

The Mayor addressed the repeated comment regarding the proposed £500 increase in the Mayor's allowance and it was clarified that the current level of £2,000 was not sufficient to cover the costs of being an effective Mayor, that the allowance had not increased for at least 5 years, and that it should be at a level where all Councillors would find the position of Mayor an affordable opportunity. This was supported by a number of members in the debate. The proposed budget was accepted as presented and unanimously agreed.

**Resolved:** *Following the recommendation of Finance, Policy & Governance Committee at its meeting on 22 November 2023, Council approved the following:*

- i) A 2024-25 net expenditure level £792,182;*
- ii) A 2024-25 precept level of £772,182, following use of £20,000 general reserves, to mitigate the annual increase;*
- iii) Adjustments to Earmarked Reserves as shown in Appendix 3;*
- iv) delegated authority to allocate the Climate Change Pump Priming earmarked reserve to the Chief Officer in consultation with the Climate Change Lead, Mayor and Chair of FPG to expediate grant opportunities when they arise;*
- v) Use of general reserves, whilst adhering to the Council's Reserves Policy, as shown in Appendix 3;*
- vi) A Council Tax (Band D) rate per household of £86.84, representing a 5.02% increase on the previous year.*

## **13. ADOPTION OF CHALC / CIVILITY & RESPECT MEMBER OFFICER PROTOCOL**

[Attached: Protocol - previously circulated]

Lead: Mayor / Personnel Committee Chair

The Protocol, produced by ChALC and based on the Civility and Respect model, was considered by Personnel Committee at its meeting on 25 October 2025 and was welcomed and fully supported as a clear statement of expected codes of behaviour for members and staff, with one exception. Personnel Committee wanted to ensure that all members and staff signed off the protocol, should it be adopted by Council. In Council, some members

commented that this initiative should be extended to a wider training experience in equality, diversity and respect and this was broadly agreed. The Chief Officer confirmed that she had recently met with the diversity lead and that plans to implement such training for all staff and members were underway, albeit hampered by reduced management resources at present.

**Resolved by Named Vote [All members present in favour except Cllr David Poole (Against)]:** *Following the resolution from the Personnel Committee at its meeting on 25 October 2023, Council approved the following:*

- i) *That the best practice Councillor – Officer Protocol, produced by ChALC, is adopted in full by Sandbach Town Council;*
- ii) *That all members and staff sign a statement to be contained in the document to confirm their commitment to adhere to the Protocol.*
- iii) *A progress report is considered by the first Full Council meeting of 2024.*

#### **14. YOUTH PROVISION (CEC)**

[Attached: Chief Officer report]

Lead: Mayor

**Resolved by Named Vote [All members present in favour]:** *To approve a pilot project to commission CEC to run a weekly Youth Club in Sandbach Town Hall, funded by an earmarked reserve, and to conduct a Youth Engagement exercise for facilities for young people in Sandbach, subject to CEC approval in the context of their current recruitment freeze.*

#### **15. FINANCE MATTERS**

[Attached: First Quarter budget statement and variance analysis]

Lead: Chief Officer

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

#### **16. SO 27 ITEMS AGREED UNDER URGENCY PROVISION**

[Attached: WorkNest Service Agreement]

Lead: Chief Officer

**Resolved:** *To note the decision taken under the Council's urgency procedures to approve a 3 year contract with WorkNest for HR and Health and Safety due to a contract renewal deadline of 21 November 2023 (WorkNest contracted as the Council's H&S Competent Person).*

#### **17. CORRESPONDENCE**

No correspondence was received for this agenda.

#### **18. STAFFING UPDATE**

To receive a verbal update.

Lead: Chief Officer

**Resolved:** *On the basis of a verbal update regarding the implications of current staff absence, a number of recommendations by the Chief Officer were approved.*

## **19. ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS & PUBLICITY**

Lead: Mayor

**Resolved:** *Dementia Friendly Council; Youth Provision Consultation and Youth Club is agreed by CEC.*

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

The next Town Council Meeting will take place on Wednesday 13th December 2023 at 7pm in Sandbach Town Hall