



SANDBACH
Town Council

SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Minutes for the meeting held on **Wednesday, 11th September 2024** at **7.00pm** in **Sandbach Town Hall.**

Present:

Cllr A Nevitt (Mayor)

Cllr J Arnold (Deputy Mayor)

Cllr S Corcoran

Cllr N Cook

Cllr T Wheatcroft

Cllr M Muldoon

Cllr S Broad

Cllr R Gray

Cllr S Richards

Cllr S Wright

Cllr K England

Cllr D Poole

Cllr G Lindop

Cllr J Beddows

Cllr G Price Jones

Cllr M Hough

Cllr M Mitchell

Ceri Lloyd (Chief Officer) – Clerk to meeting,

supported by Steve Wilcock (Temp Finance & Policy Manager)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs L Crane, D Hegarty and C Storey.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of a non-pecuniary and non-prejudicial interest were made by Cllr Beddows, Cllr Nevitt and Cllr Broad in respect of item 15 and by Cllr Poole in respect of Item 16. There was no stated intention to withdraw from debate or voting for these items.

3. CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL (CEC) SANDBACH MATTERS

Cllr Muldoon updated Council on a number of items including plans for the M6 junction 17 roundabout, the Middlewich bypass and CEC's Transformation programme. Particular attention was drawn to four current CEC public consultations. Full details were available on the CEC website at: [Consultations in Cheshire East](#)

4. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

Resolved:

Under the Public Bodies (admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and accredited representatives of newspaper be excluded from the meeting for item 21 of business on this agenda on 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. MAYOR'S COMMENTS

The Mayor summarised her community activities since the last meeting. Particular attention was drawn to the recent Sports Dinner for under 16s, which was hosted in the Town Hall and which was attended by 116 young people. The Mayor thanked everyone who attended and those who helped organise such an outstanding event at short notice. The Chief Officer thanked the Mayor for her ability to deliver such a high profile and successful event in the Town Hall.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

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

Bruce Jarvis (Domesday Morris Association) spoke in support of the application for grant funding of £3,000 per year for three years to support the continuation of the Day of Dance in Sandbach. The event had been successfully re-introduced in 2024 and the grant application would enable a larger scale event to go ahead for the next three years.

Sarah Bradley spoke in support of item 18 on the agenda and other related measures to improve road safety. Particular attention was drawn to the issue of speeding on the hill in Sandbach and the current lack of safety signage.

Robert Mayor from Sandbach Rugby Club spoke in support of the Club's application for a grant of £10,000 to resurface their car park. It was emphasised that the Club was effectively operating as a community hub and allowed numerous groups to use their facilities free of charge; the car park was utilised as a drop off facility for children attending Offley Primary School. A number of questions were responded to and Mr. Mayor confirmed that several other grant applications/requests for funding had been made, but had proved unsuccessful.

Helen Dorney from the Sandbach Partnership spoke to Item 16 and in support of the Partnership's application to use the Town Hall to host the Youth Engagement

Showcase over the weekend of the 2025 Sandbach Transport Festival. A number of questions were responded to and Mrs Dorney explained that in the past, holding the showcase event during the Festival had served to double footfall. She clarified that they would not hold the YES unless it was on this weekend. Ms Dorney also expressed support for Item 17 and suggested the Partnership may be able to assist with tree planting if the proposal was approved.

Paddy Johnson from the Tree Alliance – Transition Wilmslow community group spoke in support of Item 17 and explained that common issues arose when seeking to plant trees within the Cheshire East borough area. He wished to make common cause with like-minded groups across the borough and work together to ensure that the ‘right tree’ could be safely planted in the ‘right place’.

Richard Hoffman asked a question on an issue which was not included on the Council agenda. The Town Mayor explained that the question was not permitted but could be considered under public questions at next Council meeting as it had been raised in advance.

After questions the Town Mayor reconvened the Town Council Meeting and referred all discussion to the items as set on the Agenda.

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- 6. THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 24 JULY WERE APPROVED.**
 - 7. THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE PLANNING, CONSULTATION & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEES HELD ON 29 JULY AND 27 AUGUST (DRAFT) WERE NOTED.**

8. FESTIVAL OF LIGHT – WORKING GROUP PROPOSALS

Cllrs Arnold and Gray made a presentation to Council on the ideas generated by the Working Group for the Festival which is proposed will take place in early February 2025. The Festival was intended to be a free, fun and entertaining event for children and teenagers with a range of activities and performers. Several members spoke in support of the proposed event and a number of questions were addressed.

Resolved: *that Council*

- i. receive the presentation from Cllrs Arnold and Gray of the work and proposals of the Festival of Light Working Group to date,*
- ii. delegate authority to the Chief Officer, in consultation with the FOL Working Group, to progress and implement the Festival of Light in February 2025, subject to a maximum budget of £8,000 to be funded by the events budget and general reserves in the current year and to be considered as part of the budget setting process for future years.*

9. CEC CAR PARK STRATEGY MITIGATIONS UPDATE

Cllr Wheatcroft updated Council on his assessment of the work of the Car Park Strategy Mitigation Working Group. He explained that the Council's request for meaningful consultation and engagement from CEC on the issue of mitigation had not proceeded as hoped; rather the Town Council had received an offer from CEC for compensation in full for all six car parks for a 5-year period. The Town Council's request for an option to subsidise the introduction of charging had not yet been responded to. Although CEC had requested a response within 28 days, the Town Council had requested an extension to allow today's Council meeting to consider the issue.

Given the limited options available and the costs involved, Cllr Wheatcroft explained that he felt the only viable / realistic option was to take over the lease on one or two of the larger car parks; the most expensive option proposed would cost the equivalent of 37p on the Council's precept.

Members thanked Cllr Wheatcroft and the Working Group for their work to date. Some members were opposed in principle to the concept of mitigation which would involve non-car owners effectively subsidising car owners. The practical benefits to the town of facilitating more free parking was also questioned and concerns were also expressed about the Town Council extending its financial commitments into service areas previously provided by CEC.

The Chief Officer explained that her understanding was that charging was likely to start in October; the figures involved to offer mitigation were relatively large and it would be sensible for Council to consider fully worked up and costed proposals alongside other demands when considering the Council's 2025-26 budget to be decided in December. This meant any mitigation that might be approved would have to be applied retrospectively.

Resolved: *That the update from the Working Group Lead be received and that the PP Working Group be asked to continue its work and present options for consideration by Council in December ensuring that such options were published in advance.*

[Council agreed to reorder the agenda and consider Grant Application items 14, 15 and 16 in advance for visitor convenience]

10. SANDBACH TOWN RUGBY CLUB GRANT APPLICATION (Item 14 on agenda)

[Attached: Rugby Club Grant Application for £10,000]

Lead: Chair

Members were appreciative of the contribution made by the Club to the wider community but were concerned that approving the grant in full would mean the Council could not afford to approve other worthy applications. A motion to award a grant of £8,000 being defeated, with 5 votes in favour and 9 against.

Resolved:

That a grant award of £5,000 be approved to the Sandbach Town Rugby Club. [Post meeting note – subject to the project going ahead CL].

11. DAY OF DANCE GRANT APPLICATION (Item 15 on agenda)

[Attached: Domesday Morris Association Grant Application of £3,000 per year for 3 years]

Lead: Chair

The merits of the application and the amount of funding allocated to the provision of food was debated, with a motion to award a grant of £1,500 per year for three years being defeated with 5 votes in favour and 8 against.

Resolved:

That a grant award of £3,000 per year for three years (2025, 2026, 2027) be approved to the Domesday Morris Association Group.

12. TRANSPORT FESTIVAL 2025 FREE USE OF TOWN HALL REQUEST (agenda item 16)

Lead: Chair

The details and circumstances of the dual booking of the Town Hall ballroom for the Sunday during the Transport Festival were reviewed and the merits of the competing bookings by the Sandbach Partnership and the Transport Festival Committee were debated. The debate concluded with a request that discussions take place with both organisations to try and reach a mutually acceptable compromise which utilised all of the available Town Hall indoor space.

Resolved: *that authority be delegated to the Chief Officer to discuss arrangements with the two groups with a view to the Town Hall facilities being offered to both groups on an equal basis.*

13. CEC LIBRARY CONSULTATION RESPONSE (agenda item 10)

[Attached: CEC Consultation Document]

Lead: Chair

Cllr Gray explained that Sandbach library had been designated as a Tier 2 library and therefore was not considered to be a 'community hub' by CEC. All members who spoke expressed complete opposition to the proposed reduction in opening hours, but differing views existed on whether the consultation response should express a willingness to explore the role of volunteers at the library. A motion proposed in favour of this consideration being included in the consultation response was defeated with 7 votes in favour and 8 against.

Resolved:

*that authority be delegated to the Chief Officer to submit the Council's consultation response on the basis that it should **not** include an expression of willingness to explore the use of volunteers at Sandbach Library.*

MEETING EXTENSION

Resolved:

that Council agree to extend the meeting to 9.30pm.

14. SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL VOLUNTEER CO-ORDINATION ROLE (agenda item 11)

[Attached: Chief Officer Report]

Lead: Chair

The Chief Officer explained that the proposal was designed to fill a gap which had been specifically identified in the current provision in volunteering to provide services to vulnerable groups in Sandbach (including NHS and social care referrals) . Subject to securing grant funding of £10,000, the arrangements would run for a pilot period of 12 months at a net cost of up to £10,000 to the Town Council.

Members were supportive of the voluntary sector and the Town Council's role in supporting and promoting the voluntary sector in the town. Cllr Cook did however express concerns regarding the appropriateness and capacity of the Council becoming directly involved in the provision of the service. In response to questions, the Chief Officer confirmed her belief that Council resources were sufficient to support the proposed service, through the Communities and Corporate Senior Manager, and emphasised that the pilot would be reviewed after 12 months.

Resolved:

- i) That the application for the flourish fund be submitted in the name of the Town Council by the deadline of 13 September;*
- ii) That, subject to a successful bid, the Town Council employ a part time volunteer co-ordinator for a 12 month temporary period to run volunteer services for vulnerable groups (including NHS and social care referrals) in partnership with CEC and the Connected Communities Group;*
- iii) That the financial and resource implications are understood at a net cost of up to £10k to the Town Council for a 12 month pilot;*
- iv) That the pilot is reviewed and longer term proposals are developed.*

15. TOWN HALL EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENT (agenda item 12)

[Attached: Chief Officer Report]

Lead: Chief Officer

Resolved: *That the item is deferred due to time constraints.*

16. CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE/FREE USE OF TOWN HALL REQUEST

Lead: Chief Officer

Resolved:

That free use of the Town Hall for Climate Change related events be approved with authority delegated to the Assets and Services Committee as well as Full Council to approve appropriate free bookings.

17. MEMBER'S ITEM – TREE PLANTING

[Attached: Member's item form]

Lead: Cllr S Corcoran

Cllr Corcoran explained some of the issues and difficulties in securing permissions to plant trees in the borough. In response to questions, he emphasised that the motion proposing tree planting was conditional on funding being available.

Resolved:

- i) That Sandbach Town Council wishes to work with residents and Cheshire East Council to plant trees in Sandbach;*
- ii) That Sandbach Town Council delegates authority to the Clerk, in consultation with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, to agree specific sites and tree species with Cheshire East Council officers, investigate the cost of insurance and maintenance, and proceed with submitting Green Spaces 3rd Party Maintenance forms to Cheshire East Council for the planting of trees if funding is available.*

18. DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Town Council Meeting is the taking place on Wednesday 4th December 2024 at 7pm in Sandbach Town Hall

Meeting Closed 9.33pm with agenda items 18-21 deferred to next Full Council due to time overrun. item 15 to be considered by next Assets & Services Committee. The Mayor apologised to those members of the public who had attended for agenda item 18 regarding the Speed Indicator Device.

Mayor Cllr Ann Nevitt / CL / SW

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