

SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Sandbach Town Council held on 13 March 2003 in the Council Chamber, Westfields.

PRESENT

Councillors: Mrs D E Alcock, Chairman
M J Wood, Vice-Chairman

Councillors: Mrs R D Frost
Mrs P M Minshull
Mrs E Rubidge
B Brindley
J M Goode
J Iddon
E A Lea
D Lloyd Griffiths
J J Moore
L Morris
N Price
D Robinson
A J Walker

The Opening Prayer was read by the Rev Janet Bacon.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors: Mrs D Flint
R W Sutton

2. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

She proposed that agenda items 8 and 9 were postponed to later meetings.

Since the meeting on 9 January she had attended the following events in her official capacity: -

Presentation of the key to the Town Hall with the Borough Mayor following refurbishment.

Sandbach School synthetic turf pitch opening with Kevin Keegan.

New Sandbach Health Centre sod cutting.

Sandbach Chairman's Ball

Francesca Hair Styling opening.

Bargain Booze launch of under-age drinking control scheme.

British Legion Poppy presentations.

Foden Band concert at Sandbach School.

Congleton Chairman's Ball.

Cheshire Regiment Meeanee Ball.

St John Ambulance Headquarters at Sandbach High School opening ceremony.

County Council Chairman's Civic Sunday at Chester Cathedral.

Sandbach Library local studies collection launch.

Alsager Chairman's Ball.

Lions Youth Brass concert at Rode Heath School.

Sandbach Community School, Crewe Road, presentation.

Elworth Hall School anti-social behaviour conference.

She reported that she would be attending a CBC Market sub-committee meeting on 20 March.

There were concerns that delays in the work being done in the High Street would interfere with the annual Festival of Transport parade on 13 April. She had been assured that the High Street project would not interfere with the parade.

3. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2003

The last sentence in paragraph 8.1 should be amended to read, "The steering group are working on the 12 projects detailed in the action plan."

RESOLVED: that the amended minutes be approved to be signed by the Chairman.

4. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2003

RESOLVED: that the minutes be approved to be signed by the Chairman.

5. LIBRARY IMPROVEMENTS

Miss Sheila Kane, Group Librarian covering Sandbach Library addressed the Council.

The Council had earmarked £8,000 for filling in the void in the first floor of the Library some two years ago but at £42,175 the lowest quotation was 33% over budget and hence the project was abandoned. However, improvements had been made in the kitchen area and ventilation had been installed in the Marriott Room.

The new proposed scheme was to bring forward the wall on the ground floor to the left of the main entrance. The cycle racks would be re-sited. The space generated would be used for four people's network computers. The present plans are for them to be upstairs but downstairs would allow better policing. They would also create a secure storage space underneath the staircase. By reducing the first floor overhang the attraction to misbehaving youngsters would be reduced. The estimated cost of the scheme was £18,500.

Originally £22,000 had been set aside which with the £8,000 from the Council made a budget of £30,000. The original money had been spent elsewhere.

Some members would much prefer the infill project and regretted that the Council had not been properly informed about the original scheme's progress. Cllr Price said that he had spoken to the library staff and the infill was not their priority. He apologised on behalf of County Council if the Council had not been correctly informed. Cllr Wood pointed out that a blind spot between the library and the park toilet block would allow congregation of undesirables if it were not

fenced off. Cllr Lea said it would have been much easier to discuss the proposals if drawings had been available.

Miss Kane said that Mr Allan Bell was the Council's normal contact for the project.

RESOLVED: that the Council are prepared to support the scheme described above at a rate of 30% of the total project cost subject a maximum of £20,000 project cost (£6,000 STC contribution).

6. EXTERNAL AUDIT FOR 2001/2

The external auditor's certificate and opinion and covering letter have finally arrived. As expected we have been given a clean report except for the lack of an independent internal auditor. The Clerk confirmed that Council had appointed an independent internal auditor for the current financial year 2002/3.

RESOLVED: that the certificate, opinion and letter are received.

7. REPORTS FROM COUNCIL DELEGATES / SUB-COMMITTEES

7.1 Sub-Committee to liaise with the Sandbach Chamber of Trade & Commerce

A copy of the minutes of the meeting held on 10 February were attached to the agenda.

8. NOMINATIONS FOR VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE TOWN COUNCIL 2003/2004.

This item was postponed until the Annual General Meeting.

9. REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

This item was postponed and will be raised at a special meeting to be held at a date to be arranged before the AGM.

10. CORRESPONDENCE

10.1 CCC - Environment Rights of Way Improvement Plan

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires the County to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan to be published by November 2007. They are using the Weaver Valley as a pilot project.

RESOLVED: that the letter is received.

10.2 Mr C Pierpoint – Market Square

He points out that any relaying of the cobbles might present an opportunity for archaeologists to uncover the history of the town. His letter has been passed on to the CBC conservation officer who agrees and has alerted the County Archaeologist.

The following was resolved with one vote against.

RESOLVED: that the letters are received.

10.3 CCC – Cheshire County Structure Plan Review

They invite the Town Council to comment by questionnaire by 14 April 2003.

RESOLVED: that the letter and questionnaire are received.

10.4 Cheshire Association of Town & Parish Councils – Playground Seminar

They are holding a Playground Seminar at Northwich Memorial Hall on Tuesday 8 April 2003 from 10.30 until 4pm. The cost is £40 per delegate.

RESOLVED: that the letter is received.

10.5 CBC – Environmental health

Mr Longshaw has responded positively to a request to remove fly posters following the joint meeting with the Chamber of Trade.

RESOLVED: that the letter is received.

10.6 Congleton Police Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2003 are attached.

RESOLVED: that the minutes are received.

10.7 Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs – Licensing Bill

The Minister for Rural Affairs and Urban Quality of Life has written to alleviate concerns about the Licensing Bill.

RESOLVED: that the letter is received.

Cllr Lloyd-Griffiths left the meeting.

11. MEMBERS' ITEMS

11.1 323 – J J Moore – Sandbach Market

It is proposed that Sandbach Town Council take over from Congleton Borough Council the management of Sandbach Market.

Councillor Moore recounted the history of Sandbach Market. When it was handed over from the UDC to CBC in 1974 there was a waiting list for stalls of three years. Now there are 28 vacant stalls. In 1985 or 6 CBC upgraded the market but had unnecessary difficulty in eliminating the through draft in the market hall. The rents are now the highest in the Northwest. They have moved from £28 per month to £40 per day. There were once two increases in the year but it was counterproductive because traders left the market. It costs about £50,000 per year to try to clean up the market. In Stockport where there is stronger market management and greater discipline the market is kept clean and more attractive. Sandbach now have someone with environmental responsibility during the day although CBC could not name who that was. Most of the indoor market stalls are taken by casual holders to avoid having to pay rent when they could not attend.

The story of Sandbach market over the last few years was one of missed opportunities.

Cllr Morris wished it to be minuted that he would not be involved in a process that in effect meant Cllr Moore becoming his own boss.

Cllr Iddon said Cllr Moore should have declared an interest. He agreed with a lot that he had said about the market being managed badly. However, the Town Council does not have the resources to manage the market, nor does it have the money to hire the necessary resources. We tried to run the May Day Market last year and despite the voluntary effort

of a number of hard working individuals the market made a loss. This was disputed.

Cllr Price said that markets were deteriorating all over the country. Shopping expectations had changed. Thirty percent of Sandbach stalls sold the same type of goods. Five indoor stalls were not occupied on one of the main shopping days before last Christmas. It was living in the past to think that a committee of Town Councillors could manage the market effectively. A Council sub-committee had met last year and had decided on what action should be taken.

Cllr Robinson was against contract management although he believed that was cut and dried. The present market administration is inadequate. For example there is no advertising. Sunday trading is killing off the markets. However, there is a great respect for Sandbach market by Sandbach people.

Cllr Rubidge thought that the Market Towns Initiative might provide resources to help the market. Why not use the market sub-committee to discuss the matter further?

It was said that blank spaces in the Common spoil the look of the market. People want to park and shop. The indoor market is closed 4 days out of 6. Saturday stall rents should be cheaper to attract new holders.

Cllr Iddon wished to correct the impression that the Borough's proposal was to privatise the market. The intention was to lease the market, which was a different matter.

The Chairman said that she would take the points made with her when she attends the next CBC Market sub-committee meeting.

12. DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED: that the next meeting of the Sandbach Town Council be the Annual General Meeting and be held on 6 May 2003. A special meeting to discuss Item 9 will be held on a date and at place to be decided.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm.

D E Alcock
Chairman

Ref: TCM0303