

SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Sandbach Town Council held on 13 December 2007 in the Sandbach Literary Institution, Hightown.

PRESENT

Councillors: W W Scragg, Chairman
Mrs P M Minshull, Vice-Chairman
Mrs D E Alcock
Mrs G M Merry
G W Bell
S A M Corcoran
D L Darnes
P J Darnes
W R Goodall
S B Holland
B E Moran
L Morris
G J Richardson
M R Sherman
R W Sutton

Also present were members of the press and about 25 members of the public.
County Councillor R Giltrap arrived at 8.30pm.

The opening prayer was read by the Reverend David Page.

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillors: K E Haines
D Robinson
A J Wood

2. **WELCOME TO GUESTS**

The Chairman welcomed two special guests who had represented Great Britain at the 12th World Special Olympic Games in Shanghai. They were 15 year old Alex Hitchings and 16 year old Mark Hughes who had come second and fourth in the world at their respective events. The events were rings for the one and floor and box for the other. They were expected to compete in next year's National Championships in Jersey in the spring.

The Chairman thought it was remarkable that Sandbach should have two such talented individuals and congratulated them both. He thanked them for being such excellent representatives for the Town. The boys were applauded generously.

The Chairman had hoped to have Catherine Wildman of the High School and Adam Rashud from the boys' school present but unfortunately they were both unable to attend because of school activities. They have been working very hard with the Council to set up a Youth Council.

3. **CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS**

Since the last meeting he had been to two concerts by Sandbach Voices which he praised most highly. He had been away on holiday and thanked the Vice-chairman for standing in for him.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting to allow questions from members of the public.

Mrs A Jones congratulated those responsible for the Christmas Lights which she believed were the best that Sandbach had seen.

Mr R Shallcross, on behalf of the Trustees of the Literary Institution, wished to thank the Town Clerk for his co-operation with them and wished him a happy retirement.

Mr J Moore reiterated Mr Shallcross's comments about the Clerk. He wished to know whether anything could be done about the illegal parking opposite Iceland. A member of the police group undertook to raise the matter at the regular PCSO meeting which would take place early in the New Year. Mr Moore wanted to know when Sandbach would be a Quality Council. The Chairman was able to inform him that with the recent qualification of the Assistant Town Clerk the Council should achieve the status before the end of the Council's year in May. Mr Moore asked whether the Council was aware of the Cheshire Constabulary's wish to increase their precept by 30%. In response it was suggested that the 30% figure was exaggerated.

The Chairman reconvened the Town Council Meeting.

4. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS HELD ON THURSDAY 18 OCTOBER 2007.

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

5. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 25 OCTOBER AND 22 NOVEMBER 2007.

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

6. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE QUALITY AND PROJECT COMMITTEE HELD ON 29 NOVEMBER 2007

The Chairman of the Committee brought members' attention to the progress made on becoming a Fair Trade Council. He also hoped that members would recognise the good work carried out by the Committee.

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

7. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE HELD ON 1 NOVEMBER 2007.

RESOLVED: that the minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman including the proposal in Item 8 to make a grant of £4,000 to the Sandbach Christmas Lights Committee.

7.1 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE HELD ON 7 AND 16 NOVEMBER 2007

RESOLVED: that the minutes be approved.

8. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

8.1 Finance and Personnel Committee – Budget for the Financial Year 2008/9

The following amendments were proposed to the budget recommended by the Finance Committee on 1 November.

1. That the Churchyard maintenance grant for All Saints at Wheelock be increased from £200 to £250 to include the cost of floodlighting the war memorial.
2. That the budget for the Transport Festival be increased from £6,000 to £7,000 following receipt of projected costs.
3. That a new item for office equipment (£4,000) be included in the annual budget.

RESOLVED: that the budget as recommended by the Finance Committee but with the above amendments be accepted for the year 2008/9.

8.2 Finance and Personnel Committee – Precept for the year 2008/9

The Chairman of the Finance Committee, Councillor Martin Sherman, enlarged on the Committee's proposals for the financial year 2008/9.

He said that the proposed budget reflected the Council's "Vision" and the proposed actions for the year 2008/9.

He proceeded to take members through the budget highlights.

Sandbach Transport Festival

For many years the Council has been a major sponsor for this popular event and in 2008 the organisers are planning a more ambitious two-day programme of events. The organisers have prepared a budget and have asked this Council to provide them with £7,000. This is an increase of £1,000 and an amendment to the original draft budget for which he sought the Council's approval.

Sandbach in Bloom & Community Pride Action Team

In the past the Council has awarded grants to the Sandbach in Bloom Committee and their work has gained awards. However the scope has widened to include aspects other than flowers and plants, such as the new community garden opened last year. More resources and planning are required to ensure success and consequently the Council has budgeted for an expenditure of £5,000.

Christmas Lights

The Council continues to be the major provider of funds and has budgeted £5,000 for improvements and additions to the lights for Christmas 2008.

Police Community Support Officers – PCSOs

The Council made a commitment to provide financial support for 50 % funding for two PCSO's for a three year period. The coming year will be the second one and £22,000 is committed to the budget in this regard.

The PCSOs continue to make a positive contribution to safety and security in Sandbach and are popular with the majority of people.

Sandbach Market Square Project

The council has committed to support this Sandbach Partnership Project to the amount of £18,000 for each of two years. The project aims to improve the appearance of the Market Square and make it a better used resource.

“Supplementary Planning Guidance Document”

The Town Council recognises the importance of making a proactive input to the plans that affect the Town. The objective is for the Council to produce a number of Supplementary Planning Guidance Documents with the expectation that they will be registered with CBC Planning Authority. They will be based on the Council's “Vision” document. The Council will need professional assistance to produce these documents for which a figure of £20,000 has been budgeted.

Sandbach Park Improvement Project

The Council will commit £25,000 to support the joint Sandbach Partnership project.

Sandbach Partnership / Market Town Initiative Support

The Council recognises the positive work of this organisation in the past two years and now considers it appropriate to support it financially as is done by Congleton and Middlewich Town Councils in similar situations. It is proposed to budget for a support grant of £10,000 in 2008/9.

Projects as part of the Council's “Vision”

The Council is currently developing projects linked to its “Vision” for Sandbach. £10,000 has been budgeted to commence feasibility studies.

Regular Newsletters

As part of the plans to achieve Quality Status the Council produces a regular Newsletter. This has been achieved during the past year and this will be ongoing at a budgeted cost for production and delivery of £3,200.

Sandbach Literary Institution

The Council proposes a further increase in its commitment to this important Sandbach building by opening negotiations for leasing an additional room from the Trustees. £7000 has been budgeted to cover the total cost of leasing the Council's rooms.

Fair Trade Town Status

This project is underway and £500 has been budgeted to assist with promotional activities.

Non Specific Grants

The Council will continue to provide grants to local organisations for projects that benefit the people of Sandbach. This figure has been increased to £12,500.

Administration Costs

The Council recognises the requirement to deliver services as efficiently as possible. However, it also recognises that the proposed increased activity demonstrated by this budget will increase the workload on the Clerkship. Consequently the Council has decided to employ a full time Qualified Town Clerk and budget for the provision of a part time Administration assistant.

Precept

In past years the Council maintained a reserve of funds carried over from previous years. These have largely been depleted for the provision of

the two PCSO's and saving the SLI building from dereliction. In addition the Council has ambitious plans for the future and has consequently budgeted accordingly for them. It is proposed that the precept for the year 2008/9 should be £222,780.

In comparison with our neighbouring towns our past precept has been the lowest by some margin. Even with this increased precept we will continue to have a lower precept than most of our neighbouring towns. Sandbach Town Council has a record of prudent spending and we plan for this to continue in the future.

A Band D household of will have a Council Tax of approximately £48 for next year shown in the section for Sandbach Town Council. *[N.B. At a meeting on 12 December CBC set a tax base for Sandbach of £6,700.70 Band D equivalent which will mean a figure of £33.25 Band D equivalent for the proposed precept.]*

This budget reflects the ambitions and proposed actions of Sandbach Town Council in 2008/9, and if fully followed and applied, will not increase the reserves above the end of year figure for the current year.

The budget and precept proposals were adopted unanimously by the meeting.

RESOLVED: that a precept of £222,780 be set for the year 2008/9.

8.3 Quality and Project Committee – “Town Plan”

RESOLVED: that the Town Council supports the proposal to prepare Supplementary Planning Guidance Documents.

8.4 Quality and Project Committee – Vision Action Plan

The document was the result of a large amount of work by the Work Group that included consultation with the people of Sandbach. Special thanks were due to Cllr Haines who had spent much time carefully analysing the results and reviewing the document. The document will be subject to regular reviews.

RESOLVED: that the Vision Report and the Vision Document contained within it be approved.

8.5 Quality and Project Committee – Youth Council

RESOLVED: that the Town Council supports the formation of a Youth Council for Sandbach.

8.6 Quality and Project Committee – Sandbach Town Council Surgeries

RESOLVED: that the implementation of the Committee's proposals for surgeries is approved.

9. TOWN CLERK

RESOLVED: that as recommended by the Personnel Sub-committee Miss Ann Banks is appointed Town Clerk starting 1 January 2008.

10. CLERICAL SUPPORT

It was recognised that with the increased workload proposed in the coming year's budget it would be necessary to provide assistance for the Town Clerk.

RESOLVED: that the Personnel Sub-committee make the necessary preparation for the recruitment of an Administration Assistant at a date yet to be agreed.

11. TRAINING 2008

Members were encouraged to apply to attend one or more of the training courses provided by ChALC.

RESOLVED: that the list of training dates be noted.

12. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

RESOLVED: that the information be received.

13. REPORTS

13.1 Latham Memorial

The Clerk had been in contact with Mr Steve Elson of the Harris Partnership and had been informed that Aldi Stores had agreed to the necessary funding to provide interpretation panels on the side of the store and to relocate the Latham memorial between the store and the Ashfields Health Centre. He expected that the order for the panels would be placed before Christmas and that for the memorial soon afterwards.

RESOLVED: that the report be received.

13.2 Speedwatch Scheme

Cllr Mrs Merry said that the purpose of the scheme was to persuade motorists to slow down. Sandbach now had its own speed gun but they would like more volunteers to use it. The PCSOs were to promote the scheme at their surgeries. Speedwatch signs were to be erected. The scheme has an effective life of only two years after which new forms of persuasion must be found.

RESOLVED: that the report be received.

13.3 Sandbach in Bloom and

13.4 Civic Pride

Cllr Sutton considered the two projects together. With support from Sandbach Partnership they had been able to purchase more plant containers. Interest had been shown by potential volunteers. They had decided not to enter the Civic Pride Competition for a second year because the scope of the competition had changed to include far more than just flowers. They were hoping to get more local organisations involved and make a sizable impression over the next twelve months.

RESOLVED: that the report be received.

The Chairman expressed his and the community's appreciation for what the two organisations had achieved.

13.5 Sandbach Partnership

RESOLVED: that these reports be now received by the Quality and Projects Committee.

13.6 Liverpool Year of Culture

There was nothing to report.

13.7 CCC – Transforming Learning Communities Meeting 21 November

RESOLVED: that Councillor Wood’s written report be received.

13.8 Ex-Learn Direct Room progress

Councillor Moran welcomed the latest letter from the Trustees and looked forward to chairing the working group to discuss the Learn Direct Room and other matters with them early in the New Year. He expected that the group would have prepared a robust business plan for presentation to the next Town Council Meeting.

14. CORRESPONDENCE

14.1 M6 Widening

RESOLVED: that the information from GAME (Group Against Motorway Expansion) be received.

14.2 M6 Junction 17

Disappointment was expressed that the Highways Agency had not been able to provide any of the requested information. It was confidently predicted that as things are at the moment someone will be killed.

RESOLVED: that Cllr Moran’s kind offer to organise a representative of the Highways Agency to attend a future meeting be accepted with thanks.

14.3 Sandbach Clean Team

They requested that the Council take an initiative to banish the plastic bag.

RESOLVED: that the proposal is referred to the Quality and Projects for investigation and that a letter is sent to the Clean Team stating that the Council had sympathy for their views.

14.4 Almshouse Trust - Allotments

RESOLVED: that the letter be received.

14.5 Rotary Club of Sandbach – Town Spout and Pump

The Chairman asked a member of the Club in the audience the position. He said that spout had been cleaned but that the pump required maintenance.

It was suggested that a telephone call to the Head of Streetscape should resolve the problem.

RESOLVED: that contact is made as suggested.

14.6 DEFRA - Climate Change

RESOLVED: that the proposals suggested by DEFRA are pursued.

14.7 CCC – Waste Management Strategy

RESOLVED: that the Clerk makes Comments by 4 February on behalf of the Council.

14.8 CBC – Financial Statement 2006/7

The CBC accounts for 2005/06 originally showed a surplus of £365,000. The summary accounts show a deficit in 2005/06 of £3,300,000. A

member proposed that the Council ask to see a detailed breakdown of the changes made to the 2005/06 accounts after they were published.

Similarly, the total net worth of CBC was shown as £26,244,000 at 31/3/06 in the published 2005/06 accounts, but the summary document now shows the net worth at 31/3/06 as £22,300,000.

RESOLVED: that the Clerk writes to CBC to ask for a detailed breakdown of the changes made.

15. MEMBERS' ITEMS — MATTERS AFFECTING THE TOWN OF SANDBACH

The Chairman allowed the following item.

15.1 Sandbach Park Adlington Drive Entrance

The entrance from Adlington Drive into the Town Park had been closed for the last week because of concerns over the safety of the United Utilities substation. At present people are unable to walk through the Park. The alternative route to the town centre is partly alongside a busy road over bumpy pavements past the old Texaco garage. This will discourage people from using the Park and may discourage people from going to Sandbach Market (many people tend to park on Adlington Drive and walk through the Park to the Market).

RESOLVED: that the Clerk writes to United Utilities and CBC enquiring how long is this entrance likely to be closed and urging action to speed up the repairs to the substation?

16. DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED: that the date of the next Town Council Meeting be Thursday 31 January 2008 at 7.15 pm at the Sandbach Town Council Offices in the Sandbach Literary Institution.

The Chairman thanked members for their hard work over the year and wished them a Happy Christmas. He then invited all present to join him and his wife in some seasonal refreshment.

The meeting closed at 8:40 pm.

W W Scragg

Chairman

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