

# SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL

## ANNUAL REPORT 2002/3

### 1. INTRODUCTION

One of many new introductions for Town and Parish Councils is the concept of Quality Councils. We are under pressure from the Government to become Approved Quality Council. One of the requirements is to produce an Annual Report. This is the first such formal report for Sandbach Town Council.

The Council's activities can be divided into three main areas, the ceremonial, the discussion and promotion of local issues and the provision of financial support.

### 2. PROCEDURE

The last year saw the introduction of a series of new procedures for parish and town councils. Councils are now obliged to have a code of conduct for members.

Sandbach introduced this without incident.

The annual audit procedure changed with the introduction of what is called a "lighter touch" system. The new external auditor passed the accounts with an expected single qualification that the internal auditor was not independent. An independent internal auditor has now been appointed.

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 the Council was obliged to adopt a Publication Scheme and submit it to the Information Commissioner by 31 December 2002. This was done and the scheme accepted by the Information Commissioner.

The Joint Meetings with the Chamber of Trade & Commerce have re-started and generally have been considered valuable.

### 3. EVENTS

The major Civic events were the Civic parade and service on 2 June 2002, the day before the Jubilee celebrations. The Chairman's Ball took place on 31 January and was most successful in raising money for the Chairman's charity.

The Chairman is invited to the Borough's and adjacent towns' civic events plus a great number of activities put on by local organisations. Local people must value the attendance of the Chairman in his or her chain or they would not issue the invitations. The annual bowls match with the Marriott House Veterans was most enjoyable but the result of the match was never in doubt.

The Council supported the May Day Festival Committee to put on a special market on the May Holiday Monday. Whilst in the main the day had been a great success it was spoilt by bad behaviour from young drunks. Consequently, it was decided not to repeat the event this year.

The Transport Festival which is also supported by the Council goes from strength to strength and with the Town Crier competition has become one of the Borough's top events of the year.

### 4. LOCAL ISSUES

The following issues were debated in the Council Chamber.

#### 4.1 Security

The Chairman's main priority when taking office was to tackle the inter-related problems of vandalism, hooliganism and excessive drinking, especially under-age drinking. She wished to promote measures to discourage the consumption of alcohol in public places. During joint talks with the Chamber of Trade, the Police discouraged the suggestion of an alcohol ban. However, they raised the possibility of

the Town hiring its own police constable. Following further discussion with the police the Council decided to negotiate an agreement with Cheshire Constabulary for a contract of two years' duration. Detailed proposals are now awaited from Cheshire Constabulary.

#### **4.2 Environment**

Environmental matters were considered frequently by the Council and by the joint committee with the Chamber of Trade. A number of letters were written to Congleton Borough Council requesting improvements in the management of recycling, street cleaning and town centre litterbins. Although modern equipment has been acquired and undoubted improvements have been made there is still along way to go before the situation can be considered satisfactory. Sandbach performed disappointingly in the annual Civic Pride competition largely because of these shortcomings.

#### **4.3 Transport**

Concerns about the local roads are the major reason for correspondence with the County Council. The following subjects were discussed.

The Council believes the Newcastle Road and Old Mill Road junction to be very dangerous. A number of letters were sent to the County Engineers expressing our concern and suggesting improvements that could be made, however without success.

The Town Council contributed towards the painting of speed restriction gateways on the road service on the Town's major roads.

There were several debates about the Sandbach Transportation study and its implementation. Members wished to be kept informed of the proposed details and work progress.

The Council was very unhappy about the deteriorating state of the cobbles in the Market Square. It was established that the Joint Highways had allowed a sum in the 2003/4 budget for relaying the cobbles. The Council agreed that it was prepared to support the project to a maximum of £10,000 to ensure that the work was done this financial year.

We believe that the zebra crossing at London Road, Elworth is unsafe and the Council has campaigned for it to be upgraded.

Chapel Street car park has been in poor condition for some years because of imminent development. The Council has sought information on the Borough's plans.

#### **4.4 Gas Plant**

The Council supported Cranage Parish Council in their fight against the proposed Byley Gas Plant by sending representatives to meetings and by making a financial contribution.

#### **4.5 Control of major accident hazard regulations 1999 (COMAH)**

Mr Powell, Lead Officer, Civil Protection, Cheshire County Council gave a presentation to the Town Council on the Control of Major Accident Hazard Regulations with particular reference to Albion Chemicals.

#### **4.6 Regional Assembly**

At a special meeting the Council resolved that it supports both the principle and proposed establishment of a Regional Assembly for the North West Region of England. The Council accepts that a reform of the local government provided by district and county councils leading to unitary authorities will take place. The Town Council has not adopted a position on the form of, or area for, a successor unitary authority. However, the Council believes there is a need for a meaningful and

enhanced role for Town Councils and this should be defined within the new arrangements.

It was agreed that the contents of the above resolution would be transmitted to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

## **5. PLANNING**

The Council is entitled to comment on any planning application in its area. The Planning Committee meets the most regularly of all the committees. The Planning Committee has objected to only a very small proportion of the plans. Un-neighbourly development is the main reason for an objection. This has been used a number of times with regard to proposed private hire businesses. There have been four planned developments that included three-storey buildings. The Committee believes them inappropriate in most areas. The Committee objects to all applications for radio masts on health grounds. They are un-convinced by the material issued by the mobile phone companies.

## **6. PROJECTS**

The Council financed the initial design work for a lift in the Town Hall and then made a large financial contribution to the cost of the project. The Borough kept the Town Council informed on the project's progress by making presentations to Council members. The project was completed successfully in time for the Civic Ball.

We have installed new road signs on the entry roads to Sandbach.

Grants of £5,000 went to each of the secondary schools for their all-weather pitches and £1,000 went to Sandbach Rugby Club for their floodlighting.

Youth was supported by financing the new Fire Cadet scheme and by giving a grant towards a computer and burglar alarm for the Youth Project.

A limited number of members were invited to a consultation meeting on the development of the Town Park.

Following a presentation from CBC a Market sub-committee met to recommend the future action to be taken. The council is in favour in principle for the employment of a management company to run the Sandbach Market on the basis that the market is re-located and that the traders become responsible for their own stalls, but we would wish to discuss details of the agreement and seek the opportunity to comment on the financial and other content of the tender document.

The Council supported a substantial modification to the library some years ago that had proved to be too costly. A compromise scheme has been proposed and the Council has agreed to support it with a contribution up to £6,000 with a view for completion this financial year.

A sub-committee was set up to investigate the possibility of a Town Council Office at Westfields. Because of the uncertainties at CBC it has not been appropriate for the sub-committee to meet.

### **6.1 Donations, Grants and Contributions**

The following donations, grants or contributions were made during the financial year 2002/3.

Christ Church, Wheelock, Churchyard maintenance	200
Ettiley Heath Methodist Church, Churchyard maintenance	200
St John's Church, Sandbach Heath, Churchyard maintenance	200
St Mary's Church, Sandbach, Churchyard maintenance	400
St Peter's Church, Elworth, Churchyard maintenance	200
Congleton & Dist Twinning Comm, Contribution to Sandbach visitors	500
Wheelock British Legion, War memorial lighting	968

3rd Sandbach Scout Troup, Photocopier	299
Cheshire County Council, Gateways	1,500
Cheshire Fire Authority, Fire cadet scheme	4,500
Sandbach School, All weather pitch	5,000
Sandbach High School, Sports College	5,000
Sandbach Festival of Transport, Annual Donation	1,000
Sandbach Youth Project, Computer and burglar alarm	2,228
May Day Festival Committee, Donation	1,218
CAMSHAFT, Donation	400
Hope House, Donation	200
RELATE, Donation	200
Sandbach & D Arts Ass., Donation	150
Sandbach in Bloom, Donation	1,000
Sandbach Lights Committee, Donation	2,000
Sandbach Today Committee, Donation	500
Sandbach Voices, Donation	250
South Cheshire Crossroads, Donation	200
Sandbach RUFC, Floodlights	1,000
Prismo Ltd, Sandbach Road Signs	3,192
Cllr Dennis Robinson, Town Crier Honorarium	520
Marriott House Bowling Club, VJ Cup	100
Congleton Borough Council, Skate Park	2,000
Congleton Borough Council, Bowling Hut Rain Shield	1,859
Congleton Borough Council, Sandbach Partnership project manager	1,000
Congleton Borough Council, Tennis Courts	6,000
Congleton Borough Council, Town Hall Improvements	43,500
Congleton Borough Council, HERS grants	3,576
<b>Total</b>	<b>£91,059</b>

## 7. CONCLUSION

This report has not covered all activities but it shows that the Council plays an important role in local life. We are encouraged to modernise and improve our communications. As part of this move the next step is the introduction of the Council's own website in the next few days.

Please look out for [www.sandbach.gov.uk](http://www.sandbach.gov.uk) (Sandbach dot gov dot uk).